

ΛΟΓΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΠΙΣΤΟΣ,

O R,

# Scriptures Self-Evidence :

TO PROVE

Its Existence, Authority, Certainty in  
it Self, and Sufficiency (in its kind) to  
ascertain others, That it is Inspir'd of  
God to be the *Only Rule of Faith;*

PUBLISHED

As a Plea for Protestants in the De-  
fence of their Profession, and intended  
only for the use and instruction of the  
Vulgar sort. *Thos Ford. of Exeter.*  
*One of the Westminster Assembly.*

Isa. 8. 20. To the Law, and to the Testimony.

John 5. 39. Search the Scriptures, &c.

Canonica autoritas veteris & novi Testamenti, quæ  
Apostolorum confirmata temporibus per successio-  
nes Episcoporum, & propagationes Ecclesiarum,  
tanquam in sede quâdam sublimiter constituta est.  
*Aug. contr. Faust. Ma. l. 11. c. 5.*

L O N D O N,

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PROTESTANT

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TO ALL

*Well-meaning Protestants,*

Who desire and resolve to hold  
fast their Profession; Especi-  
ally those, who are least able  
to Dispute Controversies.

SIRS,

**I** Marvel not, if you think your  
selves well grounded in your  
Religion, whiles you are able  
to give a Reason of the hope that is  
in you, by proving the Articles of  
your Faith out of Scripture. For  
in this perswasion you are of the  
same mind with me, whoever you  
are. However, I must admonish  
you, that what pleases you and me,  
doth not satisfie all: For there are  
still (as of late have been) such

## To the Reader.

as will ask you, How you are able to prove Scripture to be the Word of God, and the only Rule of Faith? Therefore it concerns you, and me too, (as the times are) to bethink our selves what to Answer, when we shall be put to the Question. And that you may have somewhat to reply, I have in this ensuing Discourse given you some of those thoughts, which I have taken up by occasion of this Question, that may be put to us.

I know well, That divers Learned (both English and Outlandish) Divines have bestowed their pains, to prove the authority of Scripture such, as we account it, and that it is the only Rule of Faith. But the labours of those Learned men are such (either for language, or somewhat else) as they would be to you (if you had them by you) as the word of a Book that is sealed. I have therefore composed this Discourse

## To the Reader.

in a plain English style and phrase,  
and of no great price, to ease your  
purses, that you may have by you  
something to answer your Adversaries.  
In it I use and urge Scripture  
very little, or nothing at all in a  
manner, because I will cut off occasion  
from our Adversaries, who will  
else say, I prove my Conclusion, by  
that which is the thing in Question.

How necessary it is for you to be  
well informed in this Case, and to be  
fortified against the assaults of such  
as lie in wait to undermine you,  
and turn up the foundations of your  
Faith, I must leave you to be Judges.  
For our Adversaries, I am resolved  
never to draw the Saw against them;  
partly, because of mine insufficiency  
many wayes to enter the Lists with  
such Giant-like men; and especially,  
because there are so many Worthies  
on our side, whose great abilities  
and advantages (such as I want)

## To the Reader.

cannot but encourage them to what  
I dare not undertake. All my de-  
sign is to instruct the ignorant, whose  
desire is to learn. And to such I  
offer these weak endeavours of mine,  
in hope they may suggest somewhat  
that may serve to stay and uphold the  
weak, till they be further established  
by the help of some more able hand.  
And if this be, I have all my design,  
so as God may have all the glory.

SCRIPT.



# SCRIPTURE

THE

Only Rule of Faith.

**P**rotestants have alwayes counted the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, to be the Inspiration of God, and the only Rule of Faith and Manners. And that they may abide and increase more and more in this persuasion, is, and shall be my hearts desire and prayer to God for them. But though they hold Scripture for a Principle and Ground-plot of their Faith, yet they are called upon (somewhat, methinks, besides the Laws of Science) to prove it. And this Task I am willing in their behalf

to undertake; because the Lord hath  
 Pet. 3. commanded us, *to be alwayes ready*  
 25. *to give a reason of the hope that is in*  
*us.* For this consideration, and no-  
 thing else, hath emboldned me to  
 let the World know the rational  
 Grounds which Protestants have to  
 perswade them, that Scripture is the  
 Word of God, and written by his  
 command, to be the only Rule of  
 Faith unto all Christians. And what  
 I have to say upon this account, I  
 shall reduce unto these two particu-  
 lars.

1. I shall alledge some of those  
 rational Grounds by which Prote-  
 stants are induc'd to believe the  
 Scripture to be divinely inspir'd,  
 with the Conclusion which (we think)  
 must unavoidably follow; viz. That  
 it is the only Rule of Faith.

2. I shall a little discuss the Que-  
 stion, whether Tradition, the Chur-  
 ches Testimony, or any thing of that  
 nature, can be rationally allowed this  
 great Priviledge of being a Rule of  
 Faith; and then conclude all with  
 an Answer to the grand Objection  
 of

of Papists against Scripture, (because as it is all they can say worth our notice, so it is look'd on by them as an invincible *Achilles*) and a short, but serious admonition to all Protestants who mind the concerns of their souls, or may be perswaded to it.

## The former Part,

*Shewing the Rational Grounds upon which Protestants believe Scripture to be inspir'd of God, &c.*

**S**cripture is (as it calls it self) a Light, and therefore is best seen in, and by, and of it self, though there be nothing else to shew it. Hence it is, that when we have said as much as we can, to prove its Divine authority, we must still leave it to be seen in its own Light, and to prove it self the Manifestation of Gods mind and will, made to the

sons of men. And upon due consideration it will appear so, to any that are judicious and impartial. For how can it be prov'd to be what it is by any argument, besides the attestation given it by God, and his Spirit, and the evident tokens of God speaking in it? And so it proves it self, just as a Learned man proves himself a Scholar by his learned Exercises, when he is called to them; or as God proves himself to be what he is, by what he saith and doth.

However, we are put to prove our Principles, and we are contented so to do, as well as we can. I say as well as we can, because all Scholars know that Principles are most hardly prov'd against such, as have impudence enough to deny them. And here I must in order to my intended work, request the Reader to grant me somewhat which seems very reasonable, and (I hope) will be supposed such by all that are indifferent and impartial.

1. That in this Case, I can alledge no rational Arguments, other then  
such



such as Scripture yields and offers, to prove it self inspired of God; so that my work is to let others see the light wherein Scripture shews it self.

2. I do not in this undertaking charge Papists, as denying in terms the Scripture to be Divinely inspired. For they grant it in a sort, when they say, The Churches Testimony makes it not Authentical and Canonical in it self, but, *quoad nos*, in respect to us, who cannot otherwise be ascertained of its Divine authority.

3. I hope it will not be expected from me, that I shall prove the Divine authority of Scripture so, as to silence all Gain-sayers, since nothing can be so proved as there will not be some to make exceptions. What can be more certain then Gods Existence? And yet how many are there who deny, or question it? Christ came a Light into the World, and what Christian dare say or think he did not sufficiently prove himself to be (what he was) the promised *Messias*? yet all he could say or do  
for

for that purpose, was not enough to satisfy the most of his Countrymen and Kinred, that he was the Lords Christ. All that I can reasonably design, is to shew; that Scripture is a shining Light, that doth sufficiently prove it self to be inspired of God, though many have not eyes to see it.

4. It must be supposed in this Discourse, that as there is one living and true God, so this God is to be honoured and adored by his reasonable Creatures, with that service and worship which may become his infinite and most excellent Majesty. Hence it cannot be denyed, that there must be some Revelation made by God himself, concerning that way of worship wherein he will have his Creatures to serve him. For who can know what pleases God, but he himself, and they to whom he makes known the good pleasure of his will?

Now supposing some Revelation of Godswill in order to that service which he will accept, and be well pleased

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pleased with, I may ask this Question, *viz.* If Scripture be not this Revelation, where is it? And this will lie hard upon all who acknowledge one only true God, that made Heaven and Earth, to shew some other, and better manifestation concerning the will and wayes of God, then what he hath made in his written word. But this is to be discuss'd hereafter; and for the present I am to shew how, and wherein Scripture speaks it self the word of God, and by consequence the Rule of Faith.

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*Rational Grounds upon which Protestants are perswaded, that Scripture is Divinely inspired.*

1. **T**HERE is nothing which doth so fully and clearly, so punctually and perfectly declare the mind of God in all particulars, which concern his Glory, or mans everlasting happiness, as Scripture doth. To enforce this a little; we readily grant

grant the law of Nature to be a light shewing us somewhat, yea very much of God, and concerning our Duty towards him. But how imperfect and obscure is this light, in comparison of that which shines out to us in Scripture? Scripture indeed doth not contradict it. How should it? Both are of God, and one Truth cannot possibly contradict another. Nay further, as Scripture consents to, and concurs with the light of Nature, so it reproves the neglect, and incites to a due improvement of it, as might be shew'd in many particulars, if we were put to it. But how dim and dark is Natures light, as to the way of reconciling the world unto God, when it teaches nothing at all about it? The Heathens had their Offerings and Sacrifices to appease their Gods, and in these (for ought any can say to the contrary) they had light from Gods people who had the Divine Oracles. But all those Offerings of theirs were lying vanities, because they had not any the least apprehensions of God  
mini-

manifested in the flesh to be a Saviour of sinners. And what revelation hath God made of his mind about this great concernment, besides what we have in Scripture? did ever any of the Learned Heathens, so much as dream of such a work, as Gods reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ? And yet Papists (I hope) will acknowledge with us, that he alone is the Mediatour of propitiation between God and man.

Now how came we and they to know this great myserie, if we learnt it not from Scripture? And could any but God reveal it to us? And since it is revealed in Scripture, have we not reason to believe, that it was written by the finger of God?

For the only way of purging sin, and sanctifying our sinfull natures; what have any Heathens done by their utmost improvement of their natural light? They have indeed many of them commended vertue to the skies, and exhorted others to it. But what is that moral excellency and perfection, which the Philosophers and

and learned men of the world have laboured to promote amongst men? Is it not of a far inferiour nature, and quite another thing from that true holiness which is taught in Scripture? For this I prefer the Reader to all learned Discourse of the Divine authority of Scripture, ( not long since printed ) and only say, though many Heathens by their natural light discovered many vices, to shun the praise of them, and were sober, just, and temperate in comparison of others, yet all this moral righteousness in them, was far short of Gods image, and the Divine nature in those, who are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and as different as a living man, and his statue, or picture, though drawn (as we say) to the life. And to prove this I shall only say, That true holiness consists especially in the inward impressions and dispositions, which make a man meet for communion with God, and in the inclinations, and carriages of the soul towards God immediately, such as meer Moralists never knew. There's

(11)

a fountain and root within, from whence springs all that honesty, and integrity, and purity which appears in the outward conversation, and all is from a mans being ingrafted into Christ, and receiving from him a continual supply of his Spirit. And this ( I hope ) Papists will not deny, viz. That all spiritual good is wrought in us by the Spirit of God.

Now this way of holiness being taught us in Scripture, we conclude Scripture to be written with Gods finger, because no other then God could reveal such glorious truths to us. Let it be shew'd us, how these things came to be written where we find them, and who wrote them, if God did not. Once we think it a rational and unquestionable conclusion, That Scripture is given by inspiration of God, because we find in it the only way of our access to, and acceptance with God, and the only way of purifying us so, as we may be meet for communion with him for ever. And why? Even because God alone could teach us these things, which the hearts

hearts of men or Angels otherwise could never have conceiv'd.

All this while we grant, that these things were revealed to some men, before they were recorded in the written word. But we expect Papists will not send us to Revelations now adayes : And for any other way of knowing these mysteries, then by Scripture, we know none, and therefore resolve it is of God, and cannot be of any other.

How much will this argument be enforc'd, when we further consider, of many other particulars reveal'd in

Joh. 5. 8. Scripture, which none *but God could*  
 Tim. 3. 6. *possibly know ? As that there are three*

Joh. 1. 14. *that bear record in heaven.* That God

was manifested in our flesh, so as the alone Mediatour was God-Man in one Person. Could any Creature declare these, if it were not inspir'd, and taught of God ? Again ; How could any Creature come to know, how the world was made ? or how could man come to know, how himself was first made out of the dust ?

Can the creature remember the time,

or



or know the manner of its own Creation? And where have we these but in Scripture?

You will say, these and the like are reveal'd in Scripture: But how doth the argument hold good, that the Scripture is of God, because these things are revealed in it? *Quest.*

The argument is good, and cannot be otherwise accounted by any, that are not professed Antichristians, because they own these Revelations as Divine, and Heavenly Truths. For (I say again) seeing we have in Scripture the great concerns of our Eternity, and so many things past finding out by any creature, we must of necessity own and acknowledge God alone to have written this word. Nay Atheists themselves cannot but know that they are dust. *Sol.*

And now I shall enforce this, by shewing further, that Scripture cannot be the work or invention of any Creature, either Angels, or Men, good or bad. Good men, or Angels would never devise such things, and say they were of God; For that would be

be such a belying God, as we cannot rationally believe them capable of. Wicked men and Devils would never attempt any such thing, as penning & publishing such a Book which tends so much to the exalting of God, and the abasing of themselves. This would have been to destroy, and overthrow all which they labour so much to uphold. Hence we make this challenge, who it was that composed this Book (we call the Bible) if God did not?

*Obj.*

If any object, that it may be a collection of many things made up out of the monuments of many ages: We

*Sol.*

may justly demand, what hands they were that compiled them, and when, and where they liv'd? If they lived in *Moses* time, how could they write of the Kings? If in the times of the former Kings, how could they give an account of the latter? If in the times of the latter, how came the dispersed *Jews* to have so many Copies of the Law of *Moses*? In a word; how could any man, or men write of so many things done in so many ages, so far distant one from another? or  
how

how could any man give an account of what was done from the very beginning, and before man was made?

If it be said, that it is the work of many in several ages, we desire to be satisfied, How all should agree so exactly together? and who were they that compiled our Bibles? or how came they all to agree in calling it the Word of God? *Mahomet* indeed compiled a Book, which is to *Turks* and others, as the Scripture is to us. For those deluded souls count the *Alcoran* their Rule of faith and manners. And *Mahomet* calls himself a great Prophet, and so his followers account of him to this day. But what reasonable man sees not a bundle of fallacies and follies in that Book, which by its contradictions and ridiculous relations, confutes it self without more ado?

There are many passages in Scripture which seem to contradict one another. There are so, but they seem only contradictions, and are not such indeed. And who are they which apprehend such contradictions? are they not

Obj.

Sol.

not commonly such as are most ignorant, or least affected to the Scripture? But the mutual consistency of all those passages may be soon found out by all that are intelligent, and will use their diligence for that end. And what if there were some passages to us irreconcilable, will it follow, they are such in themselves? Surely the general consistency of Scripture with it self might be enough to persuade us, rather to charge our selves with ignorance, then to suspect it of any mistake. And here I cannot omit what a

*Jo. Goodwin.* learned man hath observed, viz. a majestic kind of fearfulness (as he is pleased to call it) in the Scriptures, under many seeming (yea many seemingly bold, and venturesome) contradictions, that yet neither the honour of their truth, nor that unity which they have in, and with themselves, shall (as he saith) at all suffer by. For reconciling those seeming contradictions, it is not my work at present. Only I shall give you one consideration, which I find in the same Author, and it is this, That Scriptures do not stand

to excuse or purge themselves, as if there were any cause to suspect them of any crossness, or contrariety unto one another. No; They speak from place to place, what they have a mind to say, with that liberty and freedom, as if there were nothing said by them elsewhere, that either was like to suffer the least prejudice by it, or else to cast the least prejudice on it. They that have a mind to satisfie themselves further about this consideration, may read his Discourse of the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, Pag. 55, 56, &c.

I shall adde for a further confirmation of Scriptures Divine Authority; That whatever it hath foretold, hath been accordingly fulfilled, and that not as Star-gazers Prognostications, at random and adventure, but punctually and precisely in every particular circumstance. So the New Testament confirms the Old, by shewing how what was foretold many ages, and some thousands of years before, came to be fulfilled and accomplished in every particular, just as it was foretold. Many things (we know) may be fore-

foreseen in their causes, so, as intelligent and observant men may foretell them, as more then meer surmises or conjectures; and the Devil (probably) can do very much this way. But Scripture foretells those things of which no reason of man can make any probable conjecture, because as they are high and heavenly, so they are purely contingent, depending only on the will and pleasure of God, and therefore the exact performance of those things in all particulars, is a strong evidence to prove it written by the finger of God. And hence it is so often repeated in the New Testament, [*That it might be fulfilled, &c.*]

*Obj.*

But here is no warrant more then Scripture, whose authority is the thing that is questioned.

*Sol.*

1. We have the consent and testimony of ancient Heathen writers, who have recorded and hinted many of those particulars. Besides; none of the Heathens ever contradicted those Prophecies, or the fulfilling of them, as (for instance) our Saviour's Birth, Death, Resurrection, &c. Though

Though questionless they would have done their utmost, had they not been silenced by the notoriety of the events, every way answerable to the predictions.

2. What need we any more witnesses, when all that Scripture hath foretold, and declared as the counsel and will of God, is alwayes fulfilled every day, as we may see with our eyes. And this serves to confirm the Divine authority of it, That no work of God is contrary to his word, or varies from it in the least, but all his Providences of Mercy and Judgement, in all changes and chances, still answer his promises and threatenings in Scripture. Yea, the sufferings of Gods Servants shew as clearly as any thing else, the fulfilling of the written Word, since nothing is spoken of in Scripture more often, fully, or plainly. And here we may challenge the World to shew any particular passage of providence, which suites not exactly with what is reveal'd in the Word; and therefore we are confident of this consent between

the word, and works of God, as a strong evidence in the Case. For how impossible is it that any one, or all men together, should pen a Book so precisely answering to all and every thing that happens in the World? What ( I pray ) hath happened to this hour, whereof an observant and knowing Christian may not say, This is no more then what was foretold, and no other then what God hath said in his word should be? Indeed Atheists and Epicures may dally awhile with Scripture, as they do with God himself, and count such things as these of small consideration. But they of them who are yet alive might see, if they shut not their eyes, how Scripture is continually fulfilling in their fellows; and hence we are bold to question them, yea, and dare them to shew, that Gods word hath not laid hold on such as they are, just so as is foretold in Scripture. Oh! That these miscreants would but read, and observe Scripture! surely then they would discern what will be their end, even the same



as of those that went before them. And though God hath left himself a latitude in all his providential dispensations, so as we cannot precisely resolve in every particular concerning wicked ones, what shall befall them on earth, yet even that latitude is hinted, and what Case is there wherein we are not provided for by some resolution of it in Scripture? To instance yet again; What design hath the Devil been driving on in these last ages of the World, for troubling and disturbing the Church, or hindring the work of God in and about it, of which there is not a President, or parallel Instance in Scripture? Or what distresses, dangers and sufferings have ever attended Gods people, of which there are not some, the same, or like, to be found upon record in the written Word, that so all Saints even to the worlds end, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope? And hence all that fear God have this to encourage them, that their troubles are no more then

what others before them have undergone; and that when 'tis at worst, there will be deliverance and enlargement, as there hath been alwayes heretofore in the same, or the like Cases. And hence also, they may challenge all those who quarrel Scriptures authority, who, or where is he, that conceiv'd, and contriv'd such a Writing, beside him who alone can foresee, and provide against all events, though never so contingent and casual? Let Atheists then sport themselves as they please, and as long as they can, their time is short, and it will not be long ere they come to know, whether Scripture be the word of God or no. Doubtless the continual fulfilling of Scripture in the course of Gods providence, is a singular good argument to any sound Christian, who can set his seal to Scripture, and say, This is so, and I know it by what is to be seen every day.

Scripture shews it self the word of God, in the mighty force and efficacy of it upon the hearts of all men.

Some-

Sometimes in casting down, and sometimes again in comforting, and lifting up. Yea strange and wonderful have been the effects of it on the godly, and the wicked, as might be shewed by many Instances, but I may not enlarge my self this way, nor is there need more then to hint it, as an argument, and leave it to be considered of by such as are sober and perswadable. All that I shall do more, is only to answer an objection, which is this, *viz.* That only some precise and over-nice People so-conceit, as if Scripture could do great matters : But others are not bound to a belief of their fancies. For themselves, they find no such power it hath to wound, or search their hearts, and therefore they believe no such thing, as some talk of, about the force of Scripture working upon the consciences, and discovering the hearts of men. *Obj.*

They are not Phanaticks only who are so conceited of Scripture. There are, and have been many too well conceited of themselves, and who *Sol.*

had little regard either to the Scripture, or him that (we say) penn'd it with his own finger, which have found by experience the mighty force of it prevailing against, and over them. But I forbear Instances, and shall only argue thus. The corruption of mans heart and nature running out in so many infinitely various ways, as it hath and still doth, and so cunningly hiding it self (as much as possibly) from the eyes of the world, How should the written word meet with it in all, and every of those ways, (as it doth) if it were not of God, that alone searcheth the hearts? And whether it do, or no, we appeal to the consciences of the most prophane scoffers. What is it (let them speak) that hath many times challenged them for what they have done in secret, when no eye, but that of God, could see them? was it not conscience within them? And could conscience have thus challenged them, if there had not been some Law whereon to draw the Indictment? How could any mans heart

heart smite him for what no creature knows but himself, if his heart did not know there is a Judgement, and a Sovereign power that will call to an account for the hidden things of darkness? It must be some sense of a supreme Authority, that keeps the heart in awe, and causes it to reflect sadly upon its irregularities in secret; and this sense must arise from some manifestation, which hath been made by the only Law-giver, who searcheth the hearts. Men are never afraid of men for any thing, which (they are sure) can never be found out, or prov'd against them: But they are afraid of Gods Judgement; which could not be, if there were not some known Law that frighted them with sad expectations; and what Law can that be, other then what we have in Scripture? Now let them speak (if any can) what it was that ever enter'd into their hearts, which the written word did not let them know, as well as they themselves in every circumstance, if they please to consider it, and compare all together.

And let them shew too (if they can) how the written word should be privy to all their inmost thoughts, if it were not penn'd by him that searcheth the hearts, and reins. The wisest of men could never frame a Law to control more then the overt act. But this Law gives a check to mens inward thoughts and lusts, when no act appears, and spits Hell-fire in their faces for what no creature knows besides themselves.

To discourse it a little farther, where is such another Law, as that of the Decalogue? or who but God could frame a Law (all compriz'd in ten words) to order the hearts and lives of all men in all ages to the worlds end? A Law that discovers and condemns all offences, in thought, word, and deed, and never had, nor will have need to be altered in any the least tittle of it. And where do we find this Law? Is it not in Scripture? It is indeed all of it written in every mans heart, unless any please to except one  
Com-

Commandment in it. But how doth Scripture explain, and clear up those inbred notions of Religion, and moral righteousness imprinted in the hearts of men, which otherwise would be very obscure and uncertain, as they have been in all; or most of the Heathens? Though nature teach that there is a God, and he to be served, and worshipped, yet Scripture alone teaches the right way of Divine Service. And it alone shews us the right way of doing all offices of love to men, so as our charity and righteousness may be more then an outside shew of fair dealing, when the inside is nothing but hypocrisie and deceit. In one word, Scripture alone gives us a Law that commands body and soul, and therefore we have cause to believe it a Law which God alone hath made. And if any proud and scornfull men shall say, they know no such thing, I can deny it with more truth, then they can affirm it. And affirm what they will not be able to deny, when they shall find it true by wofull experience on

their death-beds, or before, as others have done.

I could here ( to prove Scriptures Divine authority ) ask the reason, why such as are most vicious and abominable in their conversation, contrary to the rule of Reason, care so little for Scripture. If it were the word of a man, or any creature, what need they be afraid, or troubled about it? For what were it more to them, then a Play-book, or a Romance? certainly 'tis not for nothing, that the vilest of men care so little for Scripture read, or open'd, and applyed. No; Scripture searches their sores even to the bottom, and farther by far, then they have a mind to be discovered to others, or themselves. And now let the world be judge, if the vilest of men be not mostly the greatest enemies to Scripture. This is enough, if there were no more, to prove Scriptures descent and pedigree ( as I may say ) to be from above.

Let me adde this to all the rest,  
That a man may read a Philosophical  
dis-



discourse, or any Book that Treats of any civil and worldly matters, and never be tempted, as men commonly are about Scripture. What's the reason? and why should it be thus? If I may judge, I must profess from my heart, I can think of none so probable as this, That Scripture is of God, For certain the Devil is (as I may say) tooth and naile against it; and if it were of men, the Devil would cherish (as much as he could) the belief of it, because it were a lye. But now, when all Books almost are own'd and receiv'd under the names of their respective Authors, it shews Scripture to be of God, (whose name only it bears) because there is so much ado about the authority of it.

Another beame of light to shew Scriptures Divine authority, is its Antiquity, beyond all Records that make the fairest pretence to it, as hath been shewed of late by an *eminent Scholar* in his labours this way. *The gray hairs* (as one saith) *which are upon the head of Scripture,* shew  
it

it to be the off-spring of the antient of dayes; and this writing hath the pre-eminency to be in this respect, the first born of all its brethren. What Book dare to compare with it, as to Antiquity? And that not only as to the matter, and contents which were in the mind of God from eternity, but as to the writing which now passes up and down the world, and may be seen, and read of all. Let the world shew, if it can, any Book of so long standing, as the five Books of *Moses*. Alas! The most antient of all the Antients are but novices in comparison, and how uncertain and confused any of them are in their discoveries, is to be seen at large in the learned Author of *Orig. Sacr.* above-said. Hath any given us an account of the worlds Creation and beginning, such as we have in *Moses*? Surely any that will be at pains to compare all together, will soon perceive the difference, and vote our Bible as most transcendent. To say no more, *Unumquodque sapit autorem*; and Scripture in this is a re-

resemblance of God, who is call'd  
*the antient of dayes.* Yea, Scripture Dan. 7. 9  
 is in respect of its contents eternal,  
 as delivering to us the everlasting  
 counsels of God. What Book ever  
 pretended to such discoveries? Hea-  
 thens have talkt ridiculously and ab-  
 surdly enough of the feats, and fa-  
 mous exploits of some of their dung-  
 hill Deities: But never any dreamt  
 of their counsels. Whereas Scrip-  
 ture shews us the only living and true  
 God, not only in his effects and pro-  
 perties, but also acquaints us with his  
 mind and will, as it was from all  
 Eternity. Once the long standing of  
 Scripture shews, that it hath outstood  
 all tryals, whiles the world hath had  
 so much opportunity to enquire into  
 it, and prove it unsound, and vain,  
 if it had not been far otherwise. For  
 still it retains, and keeps up its repu-  
 tation, though there have been so  
 many in all ages, that would gladly  
 (if they knew how) have fastened  
 on it absurdity, vanity, or contra-  
 diction, or any thing else, that their  
 wit, or malice could devise. So we  
 see

see in it, as an experiment; how truth is everlasting, whiles mens opinions vary, and alter much; and as the leaves of trees spring, and flourish awhile, and then fade, and fall to the ground: So a lye is never long liv'd, but as paint, or varnish wears out, or washes off, because it hath no substance to uphold it. But great is the truth, and shall prevaile, this truth especially, when Heaven and Earth shall fall.

And this argument hath the more force, because that Scripture hath met with so much opposition, and conquered notwithstanding. For what else but an Almighty power could preserve it, when all the ungodly that ever were, could look upon it no otherwise, then an Engine fram'd to batter, and overthrow all their fleshly, and filthy interests? And that is indeed the designe of Scripture, to throw down the Kingdome which Satan hath alwaies laboured to set up to himself in the world through the lusts of Men. There are but two parties in the world, whatever  
men

men may dream, and of these, one is for Gods, and the other for the Devils Kingdome, and command. Now whiles all men are by nature, and of themselves addicted to the Devils interest in serving their own lusts, and the most are alwaies this way given, there must be more then an ordinary power to preserve that doctrine, which cries down all sinfull interests, and advances only the glory of Christ in his Kingdome. The greatest work done by the doctrine of Christ, is the subduing of mens hearts and lives to the obedience of the only Lawgiver. But whiles it is a doing this work, it alwaies meets with many and great disadvantages from the world, that makes account to silence it quite, and even swallow it up. And if it be consider'd what contrariety, and enmity is in the hearts of men against this doctrine, and the weak, and contemptible means it had to advance and promote it against that arm of flesh which was lifted up against it; who can conclude otherwise, then that God alone was its strength, and therein

therein shew'd himself the owner, and author of it? For the Pen-men and first publishers of it, they were most of them of low estate and degree in the world, and had indeed nothing to protect them, more then the shadow of the Almighty's wings. And for those who profess the doctrine of Christ in Scripture, were they not for the most part of the same rank and quality? For the Pen-men, they never insinuated themselves to curry favour with any by goodly titles, or flatteries, as men commonly do that write by their own instinct. Nor is Scripture composed ( as may be observ'd ) as if it meant to take men with excellency of speech, or mans wisdom. Only ( which is remarkable ) there is in it a majesty, and it speaks with a majestic authority, such as pretends an Author of it more then man. For such as professed the doctrine of Christ in Scripture, what reward had they in the world more then troubles and sufferings, even to greatest extremity many of them.

Now

Now who can look on these, who have been the instruments and means of propagating and promoting the doctrine of Scripture, and not presently bethink himself of some hidden invisible power that upheld them, and the work they were engaged in?

Let it be considered too, that those poor souls who in all ages chose to suffer, rather than forsake the doctrine of Christ taught in Scripture, cannot be rationally suspected as guilty of a perverse spirit, transporting them to maintain what once they had taken up, though with the loss of all that was dear to them. For how unlikely is it, that such a multitude, at so great a distance, both in place and time, should be all so unanimous ( and that in cool blood, against many temptations and entreaties to favour themselves ) in a deliberate resolved laying down lives, and all, for a thing of uncertainty, yea, for any thing less than the matters of their Eternity? Nothing else could provoke, and put them on to encounter

counter those hard trials of afflictions, but the faith they had in Scripture-promises, and the fear of that word which threatens all without exception. Promises such as no creature durst to make, and threats of judgement and vengeance, beyond all the power of creatures to inflict. These considerations ( and nothing else ) could sway them to hate Father, and Mother, and House, and Lands, yea, and their own Lives, seeing they were not mad men, or such as had cast off all natural affection to themselves, or theirs, but held them dear and precious as their own souls. Nothing for certain could put them upon such hazards and adventures, but the impulses of that spirit, which spoke and wrote those Scripture-truths as their greatest and only concerns.

And to reason no further ; How credible is it, that God should suffer the world to be so long abused, and deceived by a fardle of lyes fathered upon himself ? Questionless, if Scripture be not indeed the very word of God,



God, it can be no other then the most pernicious and blasphemous lye, that ever was vented by man or Devil. For it calls it self by the name of Gods word, and avouches him the authour of it; and what can be said more false, and blasphemous, if it be not what it pretends to be? And would God suffer such a lye to pass currant so long in the world to his dishonour, without checking it?

Some Impostures have prevailed *Obj.*  
far, and for a long time.

They have, and it is confessed, and *Sol.*  
*Mahomets Alcoran* may be an instance. But how came that to get place with so many? was it not bearen (as I may say) into mens brains with dint of Sword? Besides, was it not a doctrine that gain'd it self credit by gratifying mens filthy lusts? *Avenge your selves* (said he to his followers) *and take as many wives as you are able to keep.* And what hath served to spread, and propagate other devices and inventions of men, but the craft and subtilty of such as lay in wait to deceive, or the cruelty of unreasonable men that knew

knew the most of the world are wont to comply with that Religion, which complies most with their ease and fleshy interests? But the doctrine of Christ designs nothing but self-denial, and to this it doth most authoritatively call both high and low, rich and poor, none excepted, no not of the greatest upon earth. Now that a doctrine which requires a man with greatest importunity to submit all his interests and enjoyments to the will of God, and make performance accordingly, whenever the glory of God, or the good of men call for it, or give occasion of it, should take place and prevaile, and that against all means used for suppressing it, is such a miracle of Divine providence, as we may justly call it a scale which God hath set to assure us of Scriptures Divine authority. We know well, that any doctrine which suites with, and will serve the lusts and interests of men, may easily find entertainment. But it is unconceivable, how a doctrine of denying self, and all things else, even the most pleasing  
to

to corrupt and sinfull nature, should preserve and propagate it self without the help of such an hand, as is able to subdue all things. Now Scripture was prepared and penn'd for no other purpose, but to shew men the way of honouring God with the utmost abasing of themselves, and it is indeed the great Engine that God uses to the pulling down of strong holds in the hearts of men, and whatever is exalted in opposition to the glory and government of Jesus Christ in the world. And to say no more of this; the word and Spirit of Christ, have subdued mankind to the obedience of his name, so far as the world is, or can be justly called and accounted Christian.

It were easie for me to multiply arguments in this kind, as so many evidences of Gods speaking to us in the Scriptures. But I shall forbear, and proceed to somewhat that comes nearer to the Question concerning the *Rule of Faith*.

It is well known, that this Question hath been much disputed between

tween us, and our Adversaries, for many years, and that two things especially have been insisted on by them, to prove the Scripture no competent *Rule of Faith*, viz. the obscurity, and the imperfection of it. In this dispute they have laboured to puzzle and plunge us, by putting us to shew, how Scripture proves it self to be (what we account it) the Word of God.

To this we may justly think it a sufficient answer to say, (as one, yea many have said long since) that in every profession the Principles are indemonstrable, assented to without discourse; and the Scriptures are the Principles of Christian Religion, and therefore first we must grant them to be the very Word of God, and then say, they contain all points needfull to be known. And since Scripture avoucheth it self to be the word of God, 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. 2 *Pet.* 1. 20, 21. *Luke* 1. 70. it is rational in us to believe it. Notwithstanding our Adversaries are not satisfied, but insist much on this Question, viz. How  
we

we know, that the Scripture, that saith it is the Word of God, is so in very deed.

To this the Protestants have long since answered, ' That they know ' this first and principally by the illumination of Gods Spirit, as the inward means, and then by the testimony of the Scriptures themselves, ' as the outward means ; and lastly, ' by the ministry of the Church inducing us to assent.

Here we say not, that the certainty of the Scripture is written in any particular place, or Book of it, but the vertue and power that sheweth it self in every line and leaf of the Bible, proclaimeth it to be the Word of the eternal God ; and the sheep of Christ discern the voice and light thereof, as men discern light from darkness, and as children are known by their faces and favours, resembling their parents. As the purity, and perfection of the matter, and many particulars else, some of which I have hinted before, and whoever will see them more fully, may find them

them in a large and learned discourse of the Divine authority of Scripture, which I name the rather, because it is a Book which the vulgar may better understand, then many others that handle this question.

Though the grounds I have hinted, and others which I have omitted, induce us strongly to believe the Scriptures Divine authority, and we may count them sufficient to fence us against the cavils of our Adversaries, yet it is one thing to answer the arguments of men, and another to satisfy the doubts and fears of our own consciences. Therefore we stand to this, That no man can be effectually perswaded of the Scriptures authority (as he ought to be) in order to a sound and saving belief of the truths therein contained, unless he be taught of God by the teachings of his Spirit, which alone teacheth to know spiritual things in a spiritual manner. God (we say) is the best witness to his own Word, and his Spirit the best seal that can be put to it. In the particulars fore-mentioned,

mentioned, and many others, we see evident tokens of God speaking to us in the Scriptures. But the faith that saves us, must have this foundation, *viz.* Gods sealing the truth of Scripture by the special grace of his own Spirit to our souls. And when this is done, then is a man fully perswaded, and confident indeed, so as he can say, (and swear too if there be need) the doctrine of Christ in Scripture, is that which God hath revealed, to lead and guide me to my happiness in the enjoyment of God for ever. Then, and not before, a man hath comfort and peace in believing, having not only a grant of eternal life, but the great seal of the Kingdom of Heaven put to it. Such a man so assured, and sealed by the Spirit, (unless in a fit of temptation) never troubles himself about this Question, *Whether Scripture be the Word of God?* His trouble is most about his own deceitfull and unbelieving heart, that he can trust God no better, when he hath so good security for all that is

needfull in order to his happiness. He never thinks ( what some have said ) that the Scriptures have been corrupted, and are not what once they were. He knows that Gods Word is pure, and perfect, and is only troubled at the corruption of his own heart. Papists ( to shew what good will and respects they have to Scripture ) have a long time been quarrelling it, as if some part of the Canon were lost; and some of ours seem to yield somewhat to this, thinking no prejudice to come thereby to it. But others conceive, that no part or member of Scripture, that ever was Canonical, is lost, but that we have it as whole and compleat as ever it was. Indeed ( as one saith ) if any Book were lost of those which were commended to the whole Church, it must argue a strange conspiracy of this whole Church in carelessness and negligence, such as is not lightly incident to this generation of men. We grant, that some particular Churches, and single persons have doubted some parts of  
 Scrip-



Scripture, now generally acknowledged, for Canonical. But we deny, that the whole Church hath ever done any such thing. As for the old Testament, who can justly suspect the *Jews* for corrupting them, when their zeal for them, even almost to superstition, hath been so notorious in all ages, and is so still even to this day? Our Saviour blamed them much, and often for their vain Traditions, but never spake one word about their corrupting the Scripture, which (questionless) he would have done (had there been cause) since it was a matter of such high concernment. And if any had attempted it, it had been impossible for them to accomplish it, when there were so many Copies dispersed in all places and Countries (which were many) wherein the *Jews* dwelt. If any *Hereticks* had essayed it since the new Testament was written, how would one party have observed another, and so prevented the design? And to say no more; it is impossible, unless we imagine that all and every

one who had a Bible, should at once, with one consent, in all places of the world, resolve to corrupt those ancient Records commended to mankind as the Word of God. To clear this further, (having inserted it here occasionally) The Scriptures have been written in parchment and paper, which are things perishable, and so are subject to the injuries of time. But who knows not the difference that is between the Word of God, and the paper, and parchment, and ink which have been used to preserve and convey it to us? Gods Word must and shall stand, when all these parchments and paper-Records shall be no more. And whatever alteration there hath been, we stand to it, that the Records we have to this day, have in them all the mind of God necessary to be known in order to our salvation. They who maintain a Religion that cannot be made good by Scripture, may well quarrel it, as they have cause. But all who believe it as they ought, know so much efficacy in it, as they will not easily

easily heed such flim-flams, as some now adayes are buzzing into peoples ears. Alas! poor souls that have tasted how gracious the Lord is in his Word, have an argument which all the world can never answer to them, whatever it may do to others. These men know, and are sensible of a light within them, and that it is of God, and they heed and attend it. But they know too, that Scripture is a far more glorious light, shewing them the way of life by Faith in a Saviour who is the Son of God. And this light shewing the only way of life, they find so to perfect all the natural light in them, as they are the more confirmed in the belief of Scripture-Revelations. For no man ever denied the principles of Reason and Nature to be the impressions of God, excepting Atheists, of which there are so many now adayes. Hence every civil and sober man considers seriously, how the light of Scripture and Nature agree, and that the one is superadded, not to eclipse, but to clear the other, by a more glorious

discovery of grace and mercy in a Mediatour, for pardoning and purging all sin, which else could never have been. He is therefore the more perswaded of Scriptures descent from God, as a light from Heaven, to give a lustre to the more obscure Principles of Nature and Reason within him.

What shall I say? Gods word is known, as his work is known. And how is that? Even because none can do as God doth. He works like himself, so that any man may say, when he looks on Gods work, Here is the finger of God; *Dent. 3. 24.* Is not every work of God such as no creature can do the like? And such is every word that God hath spoken, as any man that hath reason may say, This is the voice of God, and not of man. Who can thunder with a voice like him? so we may say of Scripture, who but God could *speake such things, or in such a manner?* Never man spake like this man, said the Officers who were sent to apprehend Christ, *John 7. 46.* so say we, Never any

any creature did, or could speak as Scripture. And therefore we believe it to be the Word of God.

Now being thus perswaded, we inferr (what we think will unavoidably follow) that Scripture is the only Rule of faith. For let Papists say what they can, the Rule of faith, and manners too, can be no other then that Revelation which God hath made of his mind, and will for that end. What ! shall man, or any creature prescribe what we are to believe concerning the matters of God? It is against all common sence, and reason so to imagine.

But I shall dispute the case in two considerations, whereof one is taken from the nature and quality of a Rule, the other from the Office, and work of faith.

First, a Rule, as it regulates or him that useth it, so it swaies and commands the things that are regulated by it, that they stand, or fall, are allowed, or rejected as they are conformable to it, or otherwise. And this holds good in every Rule, whether

ther properly or improperly so called. The standard of all weights, and measures hath (as I may say) an authority to allow, or lay aside all other weights and measures that do not exactly answer to it. And so is Scripture a Rule of faith, because it shews what is to be believed, and what not. But here I must prevent, what will be objected by Papists, *viz.* That Scripture is no compleat Rule, but some things are necessary to be believed, which are not contained in it.

*Obj.*

*Sol.*

1. That Popery hath many such things as are not in Scripture, we believe. But therefore we reject them; because to make Scripture a Rule not compleat, is indeed to make it none at all. Who ever heard of a Rule, that was not sufficient to regulate all things for which it was intended? or if there was devised such a Rule, who can be so unreasonable, as to call or count it so? surely Masons and Carpenters make use of no Rules but such as will serve to measure all the work which they take in hand.

2. Whereas

2. Whereas they say that God hath left some things unwritten to pass from hand to hand by Tradition, who shall believe this? more then what the *Jews* have said a long time, and for many ages, that *Moses* had some commands given him to be written, and others to be delivered from Father to Son by word of mouth? Alas! we know what account our Saviour made of their oral and practical Traditions, which he calls vain, and so may we justly account of these. Our Saviour called the *Jews* to Search the Scriptures, and condemned all their Traditions. And why may not we take the same course and say *To the Law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them, Isa. 8. 20.* Joh. 5. 36. Mark 7 7.

3. Let Popish Traditions give as much evidence for their descent from Heaven, as Scripture doth, and we shall embrace both alike. But in this case we say, as the *Jews* did in another. *We know that God spake unto Moses, But for this fellow, we know not.* John 9. 29.

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*know not whence he is.* We know by the Contents and matter of Scripture, the Majesty of the dispensation, the power it hath upon conscience, the certain fulfilling of all the Prophecies to a tittle, and many other tokens, and testimonies of God speaking in it, that it is the Word of God, and no other. When Tradition can produce such, and the like evidences, we may haply attend it more then we have done. In the mean while, we are at a loss, and cannot believe the written Word of God, and unwritten Word (which Papists count so much of) to be of like authority, because one contradicts the other in many particulars.

To instance; Scripture shews a communion in both kinds so instituted, as is to be seen in all the Evangelists, and so administered in the Churches, 1 Cor. 11. 23, &c. according to the first institution. But Papists give only bread to the Laity, after the Tradition which they have a while received. Here is a manifest contradiction of Scripture by Practical Tradition.

And



And so there is in forbidding Priests marriage, which Scripture allows, as *honourable among all men*, excepting none, *Heb. 13.4.* and taxes the prohibition as a departing from the Faith, &c. *1 Tim. 4. 1, 8.*

What should I mention abstinence from meats; having publick Divine Service in an unknown tongue; worshipping God in, and before an Image, and the like? If these do not contradict Scripture, there are no things contradictory to be found upon earth. Yea, worshipping God in an Image, is against the light of nature, if the Apostle speaks truth, *Rom. 1. 19, 20, 21, &c.* And particularly *vers. 25.* it is plain, that the Heathens Idolatry was *-serving the creature with the Creator.*

To return where we were before; we call Scripture a Rule of Faith as it reveals the Truths of God, and commands our belief. For if we had not such a Revelation of Gods will in Scripture, we know not where to look for it. And they who question us about this, should do well to shew us  
another

another Revelation of Gods mind then what we have in Scripture. For as we believe in God only, so we acknowledge no other to have dominion over our Faith; and hence we can acknowledge no Rule of Faith, but what God himself hath made. For certain, what is the Rule, must be the Law of our belief, and who can make a Law of this nature but God only? And this I leave to be tryed by the Law of Reason, whether any thing can be the Law of Faith, that is not a Law of God? What! shall men, or any creatures prescribe us what we are to believe concerning God? It is unreasonable to imagine it. And then let it be further considered, if the Rule of Faith, and the Law of Faith, be not all one. For it is not possible to prove that to be the Rule of Faith, which doth not command us to believe, prescribe what is to be believed, and secure us of the promised good, *viz.* eternal life upon our believing, as we are commanded.

And this leads us to our second  
Argu-

Argument, from the Office and work of faith; which is such a believing God in revealed Truths, as leads us to our bliss. There is a faith that saves not (as all grant) and I need not shew what it is. But we mean a true faith, or a sincere and saving faith, and this being undeniable, let it be considered, How any thing can be the Rule of this faith, besides Divine and supernatural Revelation. But of this we may take more notice hereafter.

In the *Interim*, we appeal to the consciences of all sober men, whether we are not rational in making Divine Revelation to be the Rule of Divine Faith. For sure footing to our faith, we hope we have it, where alone it is to be had. And this will appear more plainly, in the discourse of the Question, *Whether Tradition, the Churches Testimony, or any thing of that nature, is, or can be the Rule of Faith.*

The

## The second Part.

Wherein is debated this Question, viz. *Whether Tradition, the Churches Testimony, or any thing besides Scripture, is, or can be a Rule of Faith?*

**I**N this Question Protestants hold the Negative, and say, That Scripture alone is, and Tradition cannot be a Rule of Faith.

And now I must first shew, what Papists mean by Tradition. Not (as they say) *the Doctrine delivered, But a delivery down from hand to hand (by words, and a constant course of frequent and visible actions conformable to those words) of the sense, and faith of Fore-fathers.* This they call Oral, or Practical Tradition, and this they would have to be the only Rule of Faith. For they charge Scripture with imperfection, and ob-

obscurity, and affirm it to be no competent Rule, as being not evident, or certain in it self, and therefore not sufficient to ascertain others. Hence they speak of Scripture, as a Rule regulated by Tradition, which is indeed to say, it is none at all; and this they avouch some of them in express terms before all the world.

Now if we Protestants are once compell'd to let go all Scripture authority in matters of Faith, I know nothing we have to do more, then burn our Bibles, and as fast as we can, turn Roman Catholicks. Papists do not indeed say (as far as I know) that Scripture is not of Divine Inspiration. But they say plainly, that the doctrine of Scripture cannot be ascertained to us, without Tradition; and so Tradition is the Rule ruling, as it assures us what is Canonical Scripture, and what not. Yea, they say expressly, Tradition is a competent Rule, and Scripture is not. Now in this we cannot yield to them, and we have this argument for our dissent: Tradition by their own

own concession is but a certain way of delivering down the Faith, and can be no other at most, and that it is so much, we cannot yield. But supposing it only, we say, therefore it cannot be the Rule of Faith, for it only delivers down to us the Rule. And if any think this reason weak, let him take notice of this also to back it, that Tradition is but an humane Testimony, and cannot therefore be a Rule of Divine Faith. What! The Faith Divine, and the Testimony received by it humane! What reason is in this, let any reasonable man judge. I need say no more.

Nor will it help in this case to a'ledge the supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost. For our argument is, That our Faith is as the Testimony received by it. If therefore the Testimony be humane, the Faith is such, and where are we then? Is our Faith in God (that must save our souls) only an humane, and not a Divine Faith? who ever heard such things as these? If it be said again,

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That this humane Testimony serves to ascertain us of the doctrine of Christ, even so it cannot be the Rule, for it is of men; and it must be somewhat of God ( whatever it be ) that is the Rule of Faith in God. For I may justly question in this Case, In whom do we believe to the saving of our souls? Surely no man will say other, then that we believe in God. Well; and if we believe in God, it must be because of some Revelation he hath made of himself, and this can be no other, then his promise in Christ of grace, and pardon to poor sinners. *This is the Testimony, or* 1 Joh. 5. 11 *Record, That God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* And this is the Testimony we receive by Faith, and so our Faith is Divine. If we receive the Testimony of men, our Faith is only humane. This ( I say again ) is our argument, That our Faith being Divine, the Testimony received by it is so also. And therefore we receiving only the Testimony of God by Faith, it cannot be reasonably imagined, that our Faith

Faith should have its foundation, and sure footing in any thing of man.

But here they fetch in the assistances of the Holy Ghost, but to little purpose, seeing those assistances are yielded us most likely to help us in believing the Word of God, and not the Testimony of men. And may not Protestants more rationally by far say, they believe the Scripture by the persuasions of the holy Ghost, then Papists say, that Tradition receives incomparable strength by the supernatural assistances of the same holy Ghost? surely if God have, made any Revelation of his minde and will, his Spirit most likely will help us to believe it, much rather then any thing else. Hence it is, that we care so little for Tradition because it is the testimony of men; For we have no faith to save us, but faith in God, and know not how we can have faith in God, but by receiving the Testimony, which he himself hath given.

When Papists attribute so much to Tradition, for ascertaining Scripture,



ture, we cannot yield to them in it, because we believe that God so speaks to men, as they may know that it is he that speaks. If he do not, it is because he will not, or because he cannot. That he cannot, no man can say without blasphemy. To say he will not, is little better. For he hath not spoken in secret, but openly, and plainly, so as they to whom he hath spoken, have known certainly, it was the Lord that spake to them. And this is indeed the Spirit of Prophecy, not only to declare the will and minde of God, but to ascertain those unto whom it was declared, that it was so. And such is Scripture, *vz.* a Revelation of Gods will so made, as men may know that God hath spoken. Wherefore though Papists say of Scripture, as the Jews said of our Saviour, *Thou bearest record of thy self, thy record is not true.* We answer, as Christ answered for himself, *Though it bear record of it self, yet its record is true.* For as it was the will of God that men should understand his mind, so he spake in  
such

such a manner, as they might know it was God that spake, and not man, or any creature. For what can be said or thought more unworthy of God, then that he hath spoken to men but in such a manner, as he cannot be understood, unless there be some other to ascertain them, it is he that speaks? we can speak to one another, either by word or writing, so as to know who speaks, as well as what is spoken. But God (it seems to Papists) must have some others to pass their word for him, before he can have any credit with men.

And what is it, that must ascertain us, beyond all further question, that Scripture is the very Word of God? Only Tradition, or the Testimony of the Church in all ages successively conveying down the faith once delivered by Christ and his Apostles.

For the satisfaction of those who need, or desire it; we shall enlarge in our answer, yet not to exceed the bounds of our intended breviy.

I. We acknowledge, That the Church

Church is bound to give testimony to Scripture as the Word of God; and that the true Church hath so done in all ages, we Protestants do believe. But we say withall, that the Church is only an outward instrument or means in giving this testimony, and hath no authority (such as Papists plead for) or dominion over our faith. We are so far from making it the Rule of faith, as we stand to affirm, we do not believe the Scripture because the Church saith it is the Word of God, but we believe it such for its own and the Spirits testimony, though no men bear witness to it. For what is the Church (make the best of it) but a company of men (more or less) that believe the doctrine of Christ? And where had these men this doctrine? Or how came then by it? Had they it not in Scripture? Christ indeed delivered it by word of mouth, and by his Spirit to his Apostles, and they preached this doctrine. But (I hope) Papists will not say, That the new Testament was not penned by the Evangelists and Apostles?

Apostles? or that the next Church received any doctrine, other then is therein recorded? so we are come to the very foundation of the Church, such as is mentioned *Ephes. 2. 20.* The Church is founded upon Scripture, and not Scripture upon the Church. Indeed a Church is nothing but a company of men, that believe Scripture, and make it the ground work of their Faith. And so is it distinguished from all other societies. The Church did not make or frame the Scripture, but received it made ready to their hands. God had his Secretaries, who wrote his wills and commands; and to the obedience of these men have been called, and such as submitted, and came in, have been the Church in all ages. Hence the Church (we say) hath more need of Scriptures testimony, then Scripture hath of the Churches; and accordingly, Protestants judge of the Church by Scripture, and not of Scripture by the Church. Questionless, when God shall judge all by the Man whom he hath

hath appointed, he will try all Churches and men by his own Laws. And where those Laws are, we leave Papists to enquire? For we know none, but such as we find in Scripture.

They tell us a very fair tale of the infallibility of Tradition. How impossible it is that the first Church, which received the doctrine of Christ from the Apostles, could be so unnatural, as wittingly to hide it from posterity, and deliver over to the next generation such lyes as would unavoidably damn them.

Now we suppose (as well as they) that all Parents, and Progenitors, have so much natural affection, as not to procure willingly, or wittingly the damnation of their Children. But this will not prove (say we) Tradition to be so infallible, as they would have it. For Tradition, or delivering any matter from hand to hand, by word of mouth, is and must be uncertain, yea, and soon fail, if there be not some Records whereupon to bottom it. And for this we  
desire

desire them to consider, That though  
 in the first ages, God was pleased to  
 let his will be made known from Fa-  
 ther to Son, after he had once de-  
 clared and revealed it, yet God did  
 not leave all to Tradition, but ever  
 and anon renewed the Revelations  
 of his will, as occasion required.  
 And this he did, when those Patri-  
 archs lived ten times so long as any  
 have ordinarily lived for very many  
 ages. And when afterwards *Abra-*  
*hams* seed was grown into a multi-  
 tude, it seemed good to the wisdom  
 of God, to have the lively Oracles  
 enrolled and committed to writing.  
 Hence we think it rational to con-  
 clude, that God thought his will  
 written to be more infallible and  
 certain, then as delivered by word of  
 mouth, from hand to hand. Once  
 we are sure, That whiles the mind of  
 God was delivered without writing  
 it, all the world was corrupted, so as  
 all flesh had perverted their way in  
 the times of *Noah*. They had all of  
 them at first the doctrine, which God  
 revealed to *Adam*, and how came  
 they

they to be corrupted as they were, if Tradition cannot possibly fail? Or how came the world after the Flood to be filled with Idols, so as *Abraham* must be called out from the posterity of *Shem*, whose posterity had the true Religion delivered to them? If Tradition be so faithfull in the delivery of what is committed to it; we wonder how true Religion should fail so soon, and that not among a few, but all the world over.

When it is said, That some Hereticks have risen from time to time, and these following their own lusts, and humours, and Interests, have perverted, and drawn aside others, we grant it. But we say too, That not a few, or a small party, but multitudes have been corrupted, as once it was, when all the world wondered to see it self *Arian*. Not to mention the times of *Noah*, and *Elijah*, which are famous for a general Apostacy, we ask, How all *Israel* came to be corrupted after *Joshua*, and the Judges that out-lived him? Yea, how the Body of that people were corrupted,

rupted, even while *Moses* was alive, and upon all occasions turning themselves to Idols? And how came the *Jews* in our Saviours time to have so many Traditions, not only besides, but contrary to the written Word? Now the force of our arguing lieth in this, That notwithstanding Tradition, and a written Word too, for some thousands of years past, the generality and whole body of people, who had the mind of God revealed to them, have been corrupted and perverted. And when it is thus, what credit is to be given to Tradition? Or what shall the Fathers deliver over to their Children, other then they themselves have received, believed, and practised? We cannot enough wonder at Papists arguings in this kind. And therefore desire to be resolved in some particulars, ere we can yield so much to Tradition as they would have us.

I. We would know who these Forefathers were, that have so carefully delivered over the doctrine of Christ in all ages. For our Forefathers



fathers after the flesh, till this and the last age, we know (and are sorry for it) that they were Roman Catholics, this land having taken the infection, as much as any other place; and we acknowledge that other Kingdoms and Nations were as they; so as those whom we count our Forefathers after the faith, were for a great while up and down in the world, as they that had not bowed the knee to *Baal* in *Elijahs* time. And what then can be inferred from the Tradition of Forefathers? We know there is a precious promise *Isa. 59. 21.* that Gods Word and Spirit should continue with his Church, and the Churches children, so all generations, as our Saviour promised his Disciples, *Mat. 28. 20.* ~~to be with them to the end of the world.~~ But observe, the Spirit is promised as well as the Word, because one is unavailable without the other co-operating with it, *Isa. 30. 20, 21.* *2 Cor. 2. 16.* *2 Cor. 3. 6.* and *4. 13.* But where is there any promise, that the Word and Spirit shall continue

with any one people uninterruptedly unto the worlds end? We read, that the word of the kingdom should be taken from the *Jews*, and so it was, and is not restored to them yet. And in many places where once were famous Christian Churches, there is not to be seen at this day, so much as a relique of Christianity. Witness the Churches of *Asia*, now possessed by *Mahometans*. We think it certain and undeniable, that errors and impieties of all sorts, may infect whole Nations of such as have professed the doctrine of Christ, and when the infection hath once taken a few, it will spread like a gangrene, till the body be all overrun. So when some have once departed from the faith, others are too apt to follow, and the tares soon outgrow the good seed.

Hence we answer, That we cannot admit Tradition as an infallible witness, since multitudes, yea, whole Nations have been overspread with errors, and those no small ones. For when a generation is once corrupted

rupted in their Principles, it is not imaginable to us, how they should reach their children other then what they themselves have learned. So our Forefathers after the flesh, would ( we believe ) have taught us the same Religion which had been taught them for many ages, *i. e.* the Popish, or Romish. But we deny them to be our Forefathers, as to our faith.

If any ask us, Who these were? We answer, all they, who in all ages protested against the errors and abuses of the Church of *Rome*. We know well, that *England* was Christian before *Austin* the Monk came hither. For he found such here, as stoutly withstood his Romish impositions, though it cost them dear. And what if there never had been a Church in *England* before, or that Church had utterly failed, yet the Church truly Catholick never fails, but God hath had alwayes, and will have to the end, a company that contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints, and desire to worship him in spirit, and in truth. And these we own

for our Forefathers, as to our faith, and from these we received, what we now profess, and believe according to Scripture.

To clear the matter yet further; we say this argument of Tradition supposes what we cannot yield, *viz.* That the present Church of *Rome* holds the same faith in all particulars with the Apostolick and Primitive Church, and that the same faith hath been handed down to them in all ages successively to this day. That there was once a famous Church at *Rome*, we grant, but that the present faith of *Rome* is the same with that in the Apostles dayes, can never be made good, unless Papists will have the difference of means and dayes to be the whole Catholick faith. Let them now prove their faith to be the same with what it was in the Apostles times, and we may then heed this argument more then now we can. For our parts, we stand to prove (as others before us have done) that there hath been a general departing from the faith; and when the generality

rality are once corrupted in principles and practises, we know not what they should teach posterity other than what they themselves have learned. Do not Heathens now (as in all former ages) teach their children to worship Idols, as themselves have done? And is it so hard to conceive, how the face, yea, whole body of the Church may be overspread by errors and heresies? Who knows not, that one scabbed sheep will infect a whole flock, and how a little leaven will soon leaven the whole lump. We hear of *vain conversation received by Tradition from Forefathers*, 1 Pet. i. 18. And wee know too well, that Children for the most part betake themselves to such courses, as their Fathers have taken before them.

That our Saviour delivered the whole truth to his Apostles, and they to the Churches in those times, we make no question, yea, we think it a sin to question it. But we know, and can shew, how the Churches planted by the Apostles, degenerated quickly,

and by degrees came to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, and his Gospel. And is this strange? Alas! Even in the Apostles times, how were some Churches perverted, in so much as he wonders, *Gal. 1. 6.* *they were so soon removed to another Gospel.*

And here I might enlarge in shewing, how by degrees the first Churches came to be perverted and corrupted: But it lies on our Adversaries to prove their faith, as it is now, to be as it was in the Apostles time. We have said enough to shew, how Tradition (which they so much commend and magnifie) may fail, and so prove no infallible Testimony. And who were our Forefathers (from whom we learnt our faith) we have shewed already, and now shall name some of them; *viz.* The Reformers in the last ages, and *Jo. Hu.* and *Hierome of Prague*, and before them *Wickliff*, and before him the *Waldenses*, and all that protested against the Churches corruptions in all ages upward, as might be shewed, if it were

were pertinent. *Jo. Whites Way*,  
p. 336. § 45. & 337. Digress. 48.

2. Tradition being the Testimony of the Church, let Papists first ascertain us, which is the true Church, whose Testimony we must believe. For our parts, we know none upon earth that pretend to Christianity, that do not account themselves the true Church, and that avow not themselves to have the true faith which the Apostles delivered. Now there being so many pretenders, we are at as great a loss with Tradition, as without it, since all say, they hold the Apostolick faith, and yet extremely differ one from another, not in few matters, or small, at least some of them. And it is said, and granted on all hands, that there are dissenters, and of these some are ignorant, and some obstinate, and some Scepticks, and we know too many professing Christians, who are in their wayes and doings no better then Infidels. Now may not any, or all of these question Tradition, as well as Scripture, upon this pre-

rence, that they know not which is the Church, whose Testimony they are obliged to believe ?

If it be said ( as it hath been by some ) that there is no Christian but knows the Church, It may be justly replied, that there is no Christian, but knows the Scripture as well. For all that own not Scripture, we may justly disown them, as being no Christians. A man may be a Christian ( it is confessed ) though he never saw a Bible, if he have heard the doctrine of Christ, as many Gentiles ( yea, all for ought I know ) did in the first times of the Church, when the Gospel was first preached to them by the Apostles. But to be a Christian and not know the doctrine of Christ, is a pure contradiction. Now how we shall know which Church gives the truest testimony to the doctrine of Christ, if not by Scripture, let Papists resolve us, for we know not what to answer. We think among so many pretenders there will be differences, such as Tradition will no better reconcile  
then



then Scripture, and that as Protestants cannot agree about the sense of Scripture, but some interpret it one way, and some another, so they, and others will agree no better about the Church, and its Tradition. For (as I have said) there are many Churches, and those hugely differing in some things, and yet all pretend to the Apostolick faith. Therefore we have need of somewhat to ascertain us of that Church which hath preserved, and delivered down all along the same faith which the Apostles taught. For the true Catholick Church; we believe it hath been faithfull in its testimony to the truth in all ages. But we Protestants cannot own the Church of *Rome* as such, though we know there was there one sound part of the Catholick Church, in the Apostles times. Papists indeed pretend, and boast great things of their Church, but what is that to us, who can well distinguish between a Roman-Catholick, and a Catholick Christian.

Here then we Protestants resolve

to believe the Church for the Scripture, and not the Scripture for the Church. And yet we allow what that ancient Father saith of himself, *That he had not believed Scripture, but for the Church.* For we know, that after he came once to learn the Scriptures, he then believed it, not upon account of the Churches authority, but its own only. The Church (we grant) may at first perswade Infidels to attend and heed the Scripture, as the Word of God, even as the woman perswaded her neighbours to come, and see Christ. But as they, *when they had heard him themselves, believed, not because of her saying, but because of his own word:* even so is it in the case that now is in question. The Church of Christ hath the office of ministry, to hold out the light, that others who are in darkness may see it. But this will never prove the Church to have such an authority, as Papists plead for, and much less that their Church is the Catholick Church, which only holds the Apostolick faith. And when they have

John 4.  
41. 42.

have said all they can, they say no more then any Church, never so corrupt, will say for it self, *viz.* That it hath the doctrine of Christ which the Apostles taught. Hence we say again, that Tradition leaves us at an irrecoverable loss, and that we must have somewhat more certain, then the Churches testimony, which any company ( of never so corrupt principles) may pretend unto, as well as the Church of *Rome*.

3. We desire to be satisfied, whether the doctrine delivered down, be true, because the Church hath delivered it, or that the Church hath delivered it, because it is the truth. For we think the Church ought to receive and believe the truth only, and to deliver that, and nothing else to be believed by others, and if it received other then the truth, it was deceived, and if it delivered other, it was not only deceived, but deceived others also. The Church can make nothing to be true, but what is such before of it self, and all it can do, is to declare the truth which it hath received,

ceived, and perswade others to believe it. Therefore when Papists press us ( as they do ) about our being assured of Scripture, we say, that we believe it upon account of its own authority, because it speaks it self the Word of God. For as when a place of trust and honor is conferred upon a person by his Prince, and assured to him under the Great Seal, though the messenger ( that brings the Patent ) may avow it to be the Princes act, yet that which gives assurance to the person of his interest in that office and honour, is the Patent it self, and the Seal annex. So we know the voice of God speaking to us in his Word, and even so hath the true Church, in all ages, received Scripture, as the true Word of God, and commended it to others for such, as a Patent sealed from Heaven.

4. We desire to know when the Church first resolved the Case in Question, and determined, what is the doctrine of Christ. For the *Florentine*, and *Tridentine* Councils,

cils, we count them of a latter date,  
and but of yesterday in comparison.  
For our part we think (under cor-  
rection of better judgments) that  
the Canon was agreed upon very  
early, because two eminent ones  
among the Ancients, counted upon  
the same number of Canonicals, Aug. contr.  
Mar. l. 11.  
c. 5.

Books which we now do; and one  
of them saith, *that the Canonick  
authority of the old and new Testa-  
ment was confirmed in the Apostles  
times.* And that it was so agreed  
very early, we have reason to think,  
because *Constantine* in the first Ni-  
cene Council, would not else have  
perswaded the Fathers assembled to  
examine and try all questions and  
controversies by the Canon of Scrip-  
ture. For had it been otherwise, it  
had been rational to move them,  
first to resolve what the Canon was.  
Once we know, the Christian Church  
had need to be resolved of a Rule of  
faith, even from the beginning, at  
least, so soon as the Apostles had  
departed this life. For if any thing,  
surely this is of concernment to the  
Church,

Church, viz. To have the Rule of faith stated, as the standard, whereby all doctrines are to be weighed and measured. And this (we think) was done, even from the Apostles times, and that upon the determination which they had made ; so as there was no such Question of old about the Rule of faith, such as Papists have made of late. That some have questioned the authority of some Books of the New Testament, we know ; but we say, they were only some, and not the whole Church. Besides, to question the authority of some few Books, is not to question the authority of the whole Scripture. And indeed this question was never made, till of latter times, when Papists could no more defend their Tenets by this Rule of faith.

5. We would know how the Church came to know all the mysteries of Christian Religion: And this we have reason to question, because Papists make so much of the Churches Testimony, as if Scripture had no authority, as to us at least, without it.

What

What! did the Church devise the whole model of the Christian faith, out of her own heart? No, certainly this will never be said by any that are sober. What then? Questionless she was taught it of God, and in this ( I hope ) we all agree. Well; And how was she taught it? was it not by the Revelation of Jesus Christ? And where is this Revelation if it be not in Scripture? But I proceed, and say, the Christian Church learnt the doctrine of Christ from Scripture, the Spirit working with the Word. For the Apostles did not in preaching the Gospel, bring to light what had never been heard of, or thought on before: But they only declared to the world, the performance of what God had foretold, and promised in the old Testament, concerning *his Son made of a woman, and made under the Law, when once the fulness of time was come.* And so the Apostle avows, *Acts 26.* 22. that his doctrine was no other, then what *Moses* and the Prophets had signified before. And did not  
Christ

Christ *come to fulfill* the promises made to the Fathers, which promises were recorded in the old Testament? Yea, and Christ himself expounded the Scriptures concerning himself, *Luke 24. 27.* And *vers. 25.* he upbraids the two Disciples with their not believing what the Prophets had spoken. Now, if the Church in all ages, yea, the Apostles themselves knew the doctrine of Christ by Scripture, we think there is enough to shew us, what is the only Rule of faith.

6. Once more; If Scripture be not the Rule of faith, let Papists tell us what it serves for. Truly we are so ignorant, as if it be not the Rule of our faith, we know no use of it. And if that be granted, which our Adversaries plead for, why may we not hearken to the Church, and her Tradition, and never look on Scripture more? For they have of late framed a Rule of faith that is all-sufficient, and tell us plainly, Scripture is not so. Surely if we thus let go the Word, and take up Tradition, we



we had best let God go also, and consent our selves with the Church.

But there are some Questions to be answered, and till this be done, we talk to no purpose, whatever we say of Scripture, or against Tradition.

For how know we,

1. *Whether the Originals be entire, and the same with those which were first penned by the Prophets and Apostles?*

2. *What Books of Scripture are Canonical, and what not?*

3. *Whether the Originals are rightly translated into the English, and other vulgar languages?*

4. *Whether they are truly sent<sup>d</sup> and interpreted, &c. and what not?*

These, and such like, are pressed upon us, to enervate the force of Scriptures authority, and prove it no Rule of faith. For the Rule of faith (say Papists) must be easie to be understood of all, and it must evidence it self so, as we may be ascertained of it, that it is the Word of God; and how can the vulgar be sure of this, when the wisest, and most

most learned are not well agreed about it? What shall become of the unlearned, and such as make any doubts about these things? And there are many such, whereof some are Rational, and others Sceptical, and others (no question) are Atheistical to an high degree.

To all these we count our selves bound to answer, and our answer in general is,

1. That if Scripture were never so plain and certain, there will be some doubters and dissenters, and enemies to it also. There are too many who question, and some who deny the Existence of God. Is there no certainty therefore of Gods Existence? Or hath not God sufficiently shewed himself to be known as he is? so did Christ give evidence enough of himself, though the blind Pharisee could not, or rather would not see him to be what he was. We know, there are many in the world, who are dissenters to the Rules of common honesty and righteousness; and yet they are plain enough, and Papists

( I am confident ) think so. It is abundantly sufficient, if Scripture prove it self so far, as all honest, sober, and uninterested persons may be satisfied. These ( I am sure ) will be contented with such proofs, as the matter in question will bear. And who, that is reasonable, will expect arguments in this case, to prove more than a moral certainty, alwayes excepting that inward assurance which a gracious soul hath by the seal of Gods Spirit.

2. We answer, That the Rule may be easie, though all men do not understand it. And such is Scripture, easie ( we say ) to be understood by all that will use means for that end. What! do our Adversaries think it may be known by dreaming of it? or shall we think that God hath not sufficiently provided for our souls, because we cannot come to the knowledge of the Truth, and Salvation by it, without pains-taking? This is ( to say no more ) unreasonable. What can be learnt without using means, and taking pains?

3. We

3. We may justly look on these Queries about Scripture, as if a man should ask another, How do you know light from darkness, white from black, sowre from sweet? For Scripture gives as clear a discovery of it self, as things white and black, sowre and sweet, shew their taste and colour. But I shall endeavour to answer particulars, as they lye in order.

To the first Question about the Originals we answer.

1. That we know them to be entire, and not defective, and the same with those that were penned by the Prophets and Apostles, as well as any such thing can be known. These Records are very ancient; some of them of some thousand years standing. And must we now prove every particular, as if we had been eye-witnesses? Is it not enough, if we have more certainty of these, then can be had of any others that bear the same date, or somewhat near? Not to say, that this Question seems to strike

at the force of all ancient Records and evidences. For it may be said by any concerned, How are we sure, that these are the Authentick Copies, or transcribed exactly to a letter?

2. We are certainly assured in this Case as well as they that question us, seeing they pretend only to Tradition for their Security, and we know no certainty of that more then of Scripture.

3. We know the Original Old Testament by the consent of our Bibles, and those which the *Jews* preserve to this day (as we think) by a speciall providence. What better evidence can there be in such a case then this? They had the honour to have the lively Oracles committed to them, and we never heard they could be justly blamed for being false to their trust thus far. And these Infidels still retain the old Testament, as it was, though the Christians make use of it to justify the Christian faith against them, And if they had attempted any alteration

alteration, they could never have effected it, as was shewed before. Now while their Copies and ours agree so well together, as we have no difference with them about this, have we not good reason to persuade our selves, that our Original Bibles are as at first?

4. We know it by as good evidences, as our Adversaries know it, viz. by the consent of all Ages bearing witness to it. We do not indeed plead the authority of the Churches Testimony, as Papists do, nor have we need, seeing the Testimony may be valid through its truth, without any such authority. We give as much as we ought to the Church, when we say, it hath been all along an external instrument or Medium, to declare and testify concerning the doctrine of Christ in Scripture. And so it hath testified the Originals to be as at first.

I have yet more to say for clearing this Question, only I must needs insert, that we cannot think our selves so fairly dealt withall in  
 such

such a question. For we lay our claim by prescription, and therefore think our adversaries should rather prove the contrary by undeniable arguments, then pick quarrels with us by captious questions, such as they can no better answer then we. But we know the design, and shall say no more of it.

5. It is enough, if the Originals be in the matter and substance of them the same as at first. That they may have some alterations as to letters, or words, in the transcribing and printing of them, who questions, since the Transcribers, and Printers had no infallible Spirit that we ever heard of? But this being granted, we have no cause to doubt Scriptures authority any whit the more. What though no Original Copie now extant be so absolutely pure, as no mixture can possibly be found in it, as to words and letters, yet Scripture ceases not to be a sufficient Rule, so long as there is in it no violation, mutilation, or falsification through the ignorance, negligence,

ligence, or malice of men, as disables it for teaching all men what to believe and do, in order to their salvation. For this is it which we contend for, That all the doctrine of Christ necessary to be known unto salvation, we have in our present Bibles, and this doctrine the very same that was delivered by the Prophets and Apostles. It lies still however on our adversaries to prove any alteration so much as in any words. Hence we say further, that Books made of inke, and parchment, or paper, are things that are perishable, yea, and will come to nothing. But dare Papists say, that God hath not given his Laws in writing? dare they say, that there never was such a man as *Moses*, who at Gods command delivered a Law to *Israel*, and after it was written caused it to be read in the audience of all the people? or dare they say, there never were such men as the Prophets and Apostles, and that they never wrote any such Books, as are now called the holy Scriptures?

We



We do not know, and therefore dare not say, that they have hitherto said any such thing, and we have so much charity, as to believe they will never say it. What mean they then by such quirks, and quibbles as these, viz. That we cannot be assured now that the Scriptures are not altered from what they were at first? &c. What thoughts have they of God Almighty? was he not wise enough to foresee what might be objected in after times, so as to provide against it, and prevent all such questions as they now make about the written word? This we know, and they too, that the only wise God thought it best to have the lively Oracles committed to writing, though he could not but know, that in process of time, there might be some alteration in those writings, and that the outside materials, as parchment, &c. are such as wast and wear out. Yea this way of writing was (as I may say) consecrated at first by the finger of God, who wrote the ten Commandments in two Tables of

stone. And those two tables were soon broken, and the others afterwards prepared at Gods command, and kept along time, are yet long since gone, so as none can give any account of them. Notwithstanding we are not to seek of the Ten Commandments, nor (we hope) will any say these are not the same that God wrote at first, or we cannot be sure that they are so. Alas! to argue in this manner is to bring Heaven and Earth together. Then farewell all the credit of all ancient Records, that ever have been preserved in the World. Yea, then let the Scriptures (which are the most ancient Records in the world) go too, upon the same account. And this, we think, some would have, or they would no more trouble the world with such frivolous Queries as these. How (say they) can we be sure that the Originals are the same that were first penned? what pitie it is, that these men stood not by, when God commanded a Law to be writ-

ten for his people, and the same to continue unto all generations! they could have prompted God, and told him, what was to be considered of, viz. That those Books might decay in time, and the Copies be corrupted in the transcribing of them, or they might be lost, and laid aside; (For so they were in *Josiah's* time, when 2 Kings 22. 8. one Copy was lighted on by chance, and counted as a Jewel for its rarity.) And that in after ages, there might be much questioning about them, whether they had not under the revolutions of many ages been altered, from what they were at first by his appointment. But the only wise God, who certainly could foresee all these things, thought it best to have his Word written, and yet made no extraordinary provision for transcribing them upon occasion, or preventing such questions, as are now made by some. Sure we are, that our Saviour calls the *Jews* to Scripture, and they do not excuse themselves, by saying, they know not whether they have the Law of *Moses*.

Joh. 5. 39.

as it was first delivered ; nay, they confess, that God spake by *Moses*, and they knew it. And our Saviour puts the question [*whether he were the Christ*] to be proved by Scripture. Strange ! that the only wise God should not foresee this quarrel might be made in after ages, which Papists make now. For might not the *Jews* say, the Law of *Moses*, and the writings of the Prophets, were no Rule of faith and manners to them, because they could not evidence their own certainty, so as to ascertain them. And how could they ascertain them then, more than us now ?

Obj.

But Tradition is it which must secure all, by its affidavit made to Scripture.

Sol.

And what do we then believe in believing Scripture, the authority of God, or men ? If Scriptures authority, as to us, depends upon the Churches Testimony, in our belief of Scripture, we believe men, and not God ; at least, we believe God for the Testimony of men. And what kind

kind of faith that is, let them who question us so much about Scripture, resolve us. For the various readings that are in the Originals, we acknowledge them, and think, they happened much through the mistakes of those who transcribed the Copies from time to time. However they happened ( for we stand not much upon it ) Papists know, that the *Jews Masoreth* hath well provided for the Old Testament. And though the New hath very many, we stand to maintain, that all those various readings put together, ( let the worst be made of them ) can never be improved to prejudice the authority of Scripture in one Article of Faith. For all the written and printed Copies of the Original Bibles, do concur in the whole main doctrine of Christ throughout. And thereupon we challenge Papists to shew any alteration, that clashes with the doctrine first delivered, notwithstanding all the various readings in so great a multitude of Copies.

Hence we conclude, ( as a learned

man hath it) ' That the true and  
 ' proper foundation of Christian Re-  
 ' ligion is not ink and paper, nor any  
 ' writing, or writings, whether Ori-  
 ' ginals, or Translations, but that  
 ' substance of matter, those gracious  
 ' counsels of God concerning the  
 ' salvation of the world by Jesus  
 ' Christ, which are indeed represen-  
 ' ted and declared, both in Transla-  
 ' tions and Originals, but are really  
 ' and essentially distinct from both,  
 ' and no wayes, for their natures and  
 ' beings, depending on either of  
 ' them. The writing (as he saith)  
 ' declares the nature, or tenour of  
 ' the bargain, which was in reality,  
 ' and compleatness of being, before  
 ' the writing, and consequently the  
 ' writing can be no part of it. In  
 ' like manner, the good pleasure of  
 ' God concerning mans salvation,  
 ' had its being in God himself, long  
 ' before any part of it was imparted  
 ' unto the world by any writing. For  
 ' it was savingly imparted; *first*, By  
 ' immediate inspiration of God unto  
 ' some men. And *secondly*, By word  
 of

' of mouth from these to many others;  
 ' long before any part of it was or-  
 ' dered by God to be set down in  
 ' writing. So that no Book or wri-  
 ' ting whatsoever, is either in whole  
 ' or in part, the Word or Will of  
 ' God, and consequently no founda-  
 ' tion of Christian Religion, unless  
 ' we make some other foundation  
 ' besides the Word of God.

As for the Originals; we are assu-  
 red that they are intire, and not de-  
 fective, as any can be sure of any  
 thing that is of so long standing.  
 And therefore we are bold to think,  
 that they who question us, as they do  
 in this kind, might rather have que-  
 stioned God himself, for represent-  
 ing his mind and will in writing,  
 when he could not but foresee that  
 such manner of questions might be  
 put in after-ages, as are made now  
 adayes. None dare say, that God  
 never ordered his will to be written.  
 And seeing it is so ordered by him,  
 why should we question the wise and  
 gracious hand of his providence, in  
 contriving the preservation of these

ancient Records unto all posterity,  
 for whom he intended them? Me-  
 thinks it were a more direct course  
 for our Adversaries to take, if they  
 would say downright, that God never  
 committed his mind and will to wri-  
 ting, then now to say (as they do)  
 that no man can be sure that these  
 writings are the same which were at  
 first. For this seems to cast an as-  
 perſion upon God, for taking such a  
 way of representing his mind unto  
 the ſons of men, as muſt leave thoſe  
 of theſe latter ages of the world,  
 under invincible doubtings about his  
 will, that reſpects their greateſt and  
 only concernments. As for their  
 expedient of Tradition; what doth  
 it other, then reſolve all the Divine  
 authority of Scripture, into the au-  
 thority of men? For they ſay,  
 Scripture cannot aſcertain us con-  
 cerning it ſelf, nor can any thing  
 elſe but Tradition, which yet is no  
 more then the Teſtimony of men:  
 And ſo the Teſtimony of God,  
 as to us, muſt be leſs then that of  
 men.



To the second Querie, we need not say much in way of answering it, seeing the Books accounted by us *Apocryphal* do sufficiently shew, what account we are bound to make of them, while they confute themselves by their own contents. That the *Maccabees* are a story of which there is good use, we deny not; and that *Ecclesiasticus*, and the *Book of Wisdom*, &c. contain many and sundry moral instructions, we do not question, no more then that the like are found in other Books, which yet pretend not to Divine authority. But this proves them not to be Canonical, as the Church of *Rome* hath determined. Once the Jewish Church never owned them for part of the Canon, nor were they ever written in their language, as the other parts of the Old Testament. True, they have been allowed to be read in some Churches, for instruction in manners. But the Christian Church never received them into the Canon of Scripture, nor will it ever be proved. The Romish Church indeed (for what

what cause she best knows ) hath Canonized these Books: But what is that to us, who can as easily distinguish in this case, as we can between light and darkness? But we appeal to the Churches Testimony, and say, that the true Christian Church had no other Canonical Books, then what we own for such. There were indeed some who questioned some particular Books of the New Testament, but that question continued not long; and if some also gave too much to these *Apocryphals*, that is not enough to countervail the general vote of the whole Church, which alwayes rejected them from having any place in the Canon.

Hence our answer is, that we know what Books are Canonical, by that light and lustre of Divine truth, which shines out, and shews it self in them. And this light is so glorious, as those *Apocryphals* dare not pretend to it, but rather seem willing to be in a lower form. For this I instance in 2 *Mac.* 2. 24. where the Author (whoever he was) confesses,

felles, that he had taken what he wrote, out of Jason of Cyrene, and contracted five Books of his into one Volume; and whoever pleases to read on in that Chapter, may easily perceive that the Spirit of God, (which spake by the holy Prophets) could never frame to speak in such a manner. God in Scripture (as hath been already said) speaks *pro imperio*, as the only most sovereign Lord, and never makes Apologies for himself to be excused with those to whom he speaks. For why should he, seeing they are all his vassals; his creatures? The distance is so infinitely great between him, and them, as it cannot be reasonably imagined, that he should court them, as that Authour doth. For the many fictions and tales told in some of those *Apocryphals*, I shall not mention them, because they are so well known to such as have perused them, and may be to others, who have a mind to be satisfied.

What need have we then of Tradition to determine in this Case?

And

And whoever hath a mind to be further satisfied, may find enough in all our Divines, who have maintained Scriptures authority against our adversaries.

But the great question is about the Scriptures translated. For our adversaries think, we can never prove them to be the Rule of faith. The Rule (say they) must be certain, and infallible. But Translations are many and various, and much different, if not in many things contrary to one another. And then how shall the vulgar understand which of them doth indeed declare the mind of God? Or how shall the unlearned be infallibly sure, that this or that Translation doth not erre?

Now to clear our selves in this puzzling question, I say ( what Papists cannot deny ) that the whole Canon was at first written in two Languages, which very few in comparison for these many Ages have understood better then our common people do. But when the Scripture

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ture was pen'd, these Languages, *viz.* Hebrew and Greek, were best known to the Church of any other. Hebrew was the Mother tongue of the *Jews*, and Greek was a language very familiar to such of them, as were scattered abroad before our Saviours time, and then, seeing they were called *Hellenists*, or *Grecists*, for using the Greek Translation of the old Testament by the Seventy. For the Gentiles (unto whom the Gospel came as well as to the *Jews*) many of them had it for their Mother-Tongue, and others familiarly used it, because the *Grecian Monarchy* had not long before swayed in all those parts of the World. This I thought good to mention, that it might appear the more probable, that Gods mind was to have his Word understood by all.

But there were other people, who *Obj.* understood neither of those Languages.

There were, and are still such, *Sol.* and we do not deny it. But this is evident, that God was not pleased to

to cause his Word to be written at first in the Vulgar languages of all Nations. For if he had, we should not be pized (as now we are) with this Question. However what I have said, and cannot be denied, serves to hint this, That Gods mind was to have his Word understood by those to whom it came, seeing he wrote to the *Jews* in Hebrew, and to the Grecians in Greek. True, other people could not understand it without a Translation. And what shall we say in this Case? God did not cause the Scripture to be penned at first in the several Languages of all people and Nations. We must here leave our adversaries to question God for it, for we cannot deny, That the Scripture was penned at first only in two Languages, which many could not possibly understand without a miracle, unless it had been translated. Only since it was thus, we hope our adversaries will not say, it ought not to be translated, seeing there was a necessity for it, in order to the understanding of it,

it, which else could never have been without a miracle.

But how shall the vulgar know *Quest.* whether Translations be according to the Originals? And then how can the Scripture translated be a Rule of faith which must be such as a man may be sure, that there is no error in it?

This is indeed the Question, wherewith they go about to puzzle us. For the Scripture (say they) as translated into the English tongue, cannot be the Rule of faith, because not infallible. And to this we intend to answer, though others have answered it long ago\*. And our answer is, that

*Sol.*

We know of no infallible Spirit promised, or given of God for translating Scripture. And this is that which our adversaries think will give the cause wholly on their side. For seeing all Translations are liable to mistakes, the vulgar, and unlearned can never have a Rule of faith in Scripture, say they. But we shall not quit our claim to

Scripture

\* Mr. Fo.  
White, Mr.  
Anth. Wor-  
ton.

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his way to  
the true  
Church.

Scripture for all this. For we can distinguish ( as that learned Divine hath ) *between the doctrine taught in the Scripture, and the means whereby the doctrine is uttered to our capacity, as between things, and words.* The Divine truth which is the infallible Word of God, is ( say we ) the Rule of faith. The Translations are only means to shew it us, and the vessels wherein it is presented to us.

And thus in rigour of speech, we do not count the English, or any other Translation, no nor the Greek or Hebrew the Rule, because all Language is but a certain form, or manner, or means whereby it cometh to us. But because the doctrine is not made known but by words, and languages : Therefore the Scripture translated into English is a Divine authority for faith. So men believe a Divine truth although delivered by humane voice, in Preaching; and just so we have the infallible Doctrine of the Scripture, immediately inspired by the holy Ghost, though by an humane Translation



lation it be manifested to us.

2<sup>d</sup>. But how do we know, that our Translation is right, and according to the Originals? Or how can our unlearned people be sure of it? And if they cannot, how can the English Bibles be to them a *Rule of Faith*?

Sol. Our English Bible (saith our learned *White*) contains in it two things, viz. The Doctrines, and the Translation. The Doctrines was inspired by God, and written by men infallibly assisted by the Holy Ghost. The Translation was done by the ministry of the Church, and industry of certain men, who though they had no supernatural inspiration, yet we know infallibly, they have not erred in the matter, by the same means whereby we know other Truths, and discern other Articles of Christian Faith; viz. The light of the Doctrines Translated, the testimony of the Spirit, the ministry of the Word, the rules of Art, the knowledge of the Tongues, &c.

Obj. Some Translations have erred, and how shall we be sure of

of this, or that Translation ?

*Sol.* We grant, that some have erred, and any may, unless there were an infallible Spirit to assist. What is this to us, who maintain not this or that Translation, but the Scriptures well and faithfully translated, to be the Rule of Faith ? True, our Translations have been altered ; but this alteration hath been in words, more then matter. And one and the same sence may be expressed divers wayes. So we may have different Translations, without any error in the matter and Doctrine. Nay further ; what if one Translation should differ from another in sence, we are not therefore bound to quit our English Bibles, unless it did appear that we have not in them the matter and substance of all Christian Doctrine. And here we require it be shewed and proved, that our various Translations do not all agree exactly so far, as we have in them all the Articles of Christian Faith, which are necessary to be known and believed in order to our happiness.

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The differences in all our Translations are not such, or so many, as that we should need the Churches authority to assure and settle us. For God openeth the hearts of his people to know his voice from others, whiles the light of Divine truth gives testimony to it self, and receives authority from no other, as the Sun is seen by its own light, and as we discern sweet from sowre by its own tast.

However (as a learned man hath said) we deny not, that there are divers means whereby our consciences may be assured. Some private, as skill in tongues, learning, labour, prayer, conference, &c. Some publick, as the ministry, which act of the Church is not authority to secure, but ministry to shew us, that which shall secure us; which ministry is founded on the Scripture it self, in that from thence it fetcheth the Reasons that may perswade us, and sheweth the light that doth infallibly assure us. And the difference between these two is this, That the Spirit is an inward means, the teaching of the Church an outward.

The

*The Spirit secureth us by his own authority, the Church directeth us by her ministry. The Spirit hath light in it self, the Church borroweth hers from the Scripture.* For certain, God never since his people had his Laws written to them, hath left them without a ministry, and this is the great work of that ministry, to cause the people to understand the Laws of God. And how this can be done amongst our vulgar, unless by translating the Scripture, let them shew, that can, for we cannot.

Whereas our Adversaries take occasion hence to quarrel Scripture, as no competent Rule of faith, because the unlearned vulgar want a Rule, and can have no other then a Bible translated, which is liable to many and great mistakes; we may justly question them about their Translations: For they know, there is a Latine Translation (not the Original for certain) which is with them commended as authentical, to say no more. Only we desire them first to answer for themselves. However we  
may

may justly marvel, that they send us to Tradition, for our assurance about Translations, seeing our present English Translations are of no such ancient date, as we need to enquire much, what our Fathers thought of them. They are best known and discerned by those who best understand the Originals, and have the most helps and means which God hath allowed for such a work, as Translating the Scriptures. And for these we may without ostentation say, that we have as good, and as many, as they have, and the Translations we have are approved of by our Church, though not by theirs. If the Papists would, or could prove that the Scriptures ought not to be translated at all, or else help us to a Translation absolutely answerable to the Originals, and give us good security for it, they should do both us and themselves a good piece of service. But there is an absolute necessity of Translations, unless we knew of any extraordinary and miraculous way of bringing our people to understand the will

will of God in his written Word. And what then is to be done? or what can we do in order to the salvation of poor souls? There are some perhaps, who can resolve this otherwise then we dare, and say, *Let them alone to be as ignorant as may be, and believe only, as the Church believes, right or wrong.* But for our part, we are of the mind, that our people will never grope out the way to Heaven, while they are blindfolded, nor can we be perswaded, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, though we know it is the mother of superstition. *God turns men from darkness unto light, when he turns them from the power of Satan unto himself, Act. 26. 18.* and why came our Saviour a light into the world, if we may go to Heaven as blind as we are born? what have we to do while we are here upon earth, more then to get grace and knowledge, and grow in it more and more? Heaven is called the inheritance of the Saints in light, and Hell is called utter darkness.

To

To say no more of this ; we have the Scriptures translated into English, because the greatest number of our people ( whose souls are as precious as others ) cannot otherwise understand them without a miracle. And we use the best means we have left us, to make our people know Gods mind and will in his written Word. And for Tradition ; we know no use of it, unless it be first resolved beyond all exception, that we must believe as the Church believes, whatever the Scripture saith.

What hath been said already in answer to the former Queries, may serve in part for the fourth and last Query, about the sence and interpretation of Scripture. However we shall say what we think, about the letter of Scripture not sence'd, and to be sence'd.

Now the sence of Protestants is, that Scripture both words and matter, is the Rule of faith, and they read it, as any man reads his friends, or correspondents letters to know his mind in them, or as Factors

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beyond sea come to know their Merchants orders, given them in and by their letters. Sometimes a difference arises amongst these, and then what can a Factour do to clear himself more, then to produce his Merchants letters, and say, Here is the order you gave me, and I have followed it? so do we, when we are questioned about our faith; we know no other answer but this, that we have orders given us in Scripture to believe so and so, and not otherwise. We cannot in this case abstract the letter from the sence. Scholars indeed, in their contemplations, may make such abstractions. But what have we to do with them in practical use, or about moral actions? for in such cases, we must (as all sober men do) take words, and sence together. Words and letters (as far as we ever learnt) serve only to signifie mens sence, and meaning. And so doth the letter of Scripture signifie Gods mind and meaning in it. And so we produce them in any matter



ter of question, as men do their written evidences in a trial at Law. Would it be allowed in such a case, that a Lawyer (if any such could possibly be found) should evade a full, and clear evidence, by abstracting the letter from the sence? all men of common reason know, that written evidences are intended to shew mens sence and meaning, and that the letter and the sence cannot be separated, though every puny Sophister can distinguish them.

In this distinguishing between the letter, and sence of Scripture, and saying that Protestants have only the letter of Scripture for their Rule, we can guess at no design but this, that Papists would have us run as far as Rome, to fetch the sence of Scripture thence. And then we may have it sence'd as it hath been heretofore by some of them. For instance; *Behold here are two swords*, Luke 22. 38. that is, the Pope hath the power of the spiritual and temporal sword. *Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and the beasts of*

*the field*, Psal. 8. 6, 7. and this is applied to Christ, *Heb. 2.* but the Roman sense is, that all things are subject to the Pope. By cattel, they will have us understand men on Earth; by the fishes in the sea, the souls in Purgatory; and the birds are the blessed souls in Heaven. Or as they all seem to sence that command of Christ, *Drink ye all of this*, Drink ye not not all of this. These seem for certain to make neither the letter, nor the sence of Scripture to be the Rule, but somewhat else.

*Obj.* But the letter cannot be a Rule (say they) seeing the letter speaks things otherwise then they ought to be understood. For the letter attributes hands and feet, &c. to God, which must not be so much as imagined, seeing he is a Spirit.

*Sol.* We need not for all this be beholden to Tradition, or seek for the sence of Scripture from the Church of *Rome*. Our reason (if we had no other thing to help us) will teach us, that God hath no limbs, nor senses, as we men have, and therefore we  
abhor

ap. abhor to make any representations  
 Ro. of God in any bodily shipe, as know-  
 Sub. ing it unreasonable to represent God  
 will by the similitude of any creature.  
 th; What reasonable man can be igno-  
 sin rant, that Gods hands signifie his  
 the power, and his eyes, his providence,  
 hey &c. and that such expressions are  
 of made use of by the Holy Ghost, in a  
 ye way of condescension to our infir-  
 for mity? To say no more, these rea-  
 er, sonings are no better then triflings,  
 be and are best answered by taking least  
 notice of them.

For giving the sence of Scripture,  
 we have the ministry, which is an  
 ordinance of God appointed for that  
 end. So *Israel* had a Law, and Priests  
 to give the sence of it, *Malac. 2. 7.*  
 and we have a precedent recorded,  
*Nehem. 8. 8.* and we think, that Pa-  
 pists meaning is, the people should  
 seek the sence of Scripture at the  
 Priests lips, seeing they allow theirs  
 to have no Bibles. But what need  
 they make such ado about this? are  
 they, or can they be ignorant, that  
 all the great necessary truths of the

Gospel are set down so plainly in Scripture, as no man can miss of the true sence, if he do but read them with deliberation? there is no Translation but hath all these, and no man in his senses can be ignorant of them, if he will but read the Bible. And this is the love and kindness of God to us, to give us a plain and an easie Rule. What though some things are hard to exercise our diligence, yet all the necessary saving doctrine of Christ is open and obvious to such as are willing to understand and to use means for that end. Thus God hath written Laws, as men do for such as are concerned, and both the Laws of God and man may be understood by all, if they will do what is their duty in order to it. There are Records of mens Laws, which we may call the Originals, and there are Statute-Books printed for men to read, and know the Laws. And therefore all that transgress these Laws, are questioned and punished, though there are many that cannot read them, because they know not a letter.

better. For it is justly and reasonably presumed, that all that have a mind, may come to know the Laws so much as concerns them. And so may our people (say we) come to know the Laws of God in Scripture, if they are willing to it. Therefore such Queries about the sence of Scripture, &c. are no better then quibbles. They that basie themselves to trouble us with such captious Questions, might do well to bestow their pains about some others, who may give them more thanks, then we can, for their labour. I mean our untowardly people, who are some of them sometimes tryed for their lives, being indicted upon the Laws and Statutes of our Land. Let them prompt these poor wretches to plead, that the Laws are no Rule for them to walk by, seeing they never could read them, nor perhaps ever saw a Statute-Book, and they cannot be sure, the printed Statutes are the same word for word with the original Records; nor can they be sure what is the sence of the Laws, for Lawyers are sometimes

divided in their opinions about it. O ! what a brave piece of service this would be counted by some, thus to make void all the Laws of the Land ! But the Laws of *England* must not be laid down upon such pretences, and (we hope) the Laws of God in Scripture shall not be made void upon no better grounds.

For our vulgar ; they have as many advantages to know the Rule of faith in Scripture, as they have to know the Laws of the Land, and no sober man can say, or think otherwise. For as we have such as are studied and understanding in the Laws of *England*, so we have such as are by office bound to cause others to know the Laws of God. And thus hath God provided in all ages of the Church, that his people may not perish for lack of knowledge. True ; the Priests may, as once they did, *Malac. 2. 8.* depart out of the way, and cause many to stumble at the Law. And when it is thus, no marvel if Tradition in the Church be not so infallible a witness of the faith of Forefathers, seeing mostly, as is  
the

the Priest, so are the people. However this hath been Gods ordinary way for teaching his people, and Gods Ordinance is not the worse for mans abuse. His Laws are plain and easie to be known by such as are willing, and will use means to learn them, because he hath appointed Officers to teach the good knowledge of his wayes and wills. Hence we may justly say of these exceptions, that they are to small purpose, and whoever weighs the argument, will find it to strike almost directly at the dealings of God, in declaring and dispensing the knowledge of his will. For this is confessed, and cannot be reasonably denied, that Scripture was penned by the Holy Ghost, not in the several languages of all people, but in two only, which few nowadays in comparison do understand. Hence there is a necessity of translating and interpreting Scripture, and for this purpose God hath given gifts to men, and these gifts we use as we ought to do. What need our Adversaries quarrel us about what we can

not help? but we know what lies at bottom. They would fain have us go down to them to sharpen our shares and our coulter, &c. which we are not willing to do, so long as we have Smiths enough at home to make us Swords and Spears.

I shall now conclude our answers, with that which we count the Pillar of our hopes, and (as I may say) the Sure-footing of our faith in Scripture. We do indeed make the Scriptures our only Rule, and believe that in them alone is prescribed to us, whatever God would have us to know and do in order to our salvation. And in this our faith we own the Divine authority, whereof we see so many evident tokens in the Scriptures themselves. But yet we say, that as God only is a competent witness of himself speaking to us in his Word, so his Word is never well rooted in our hearts, till it be sealed to us by the inward Testimony of his Spirit, that Spirit which spake by the Prophets piercing our hearts, and perswading us, that what God commanded hath been



been faithfully delivered to us accordingly. And this promise we have, *Isa. 59. 21.* not his Word only, but his Spirit also to seal it upon the soul of every true believer. To this seal of the Spirit we owe all that acquiescence we have in Scripture. For when we are therewith enlightened and enlivened, we do no more trust our own, or others judgement, but are carried up above whatever is of man, and so we resolve beyond all doubtings and fears, that Scripture is of God alone. Then we look no more after proofs, or probabilities, but submit our reason and all we have to that authority which we dare not any longer to deny, or dispute. For then we have an inward lively sense of God speaking in Scripture, and are effectually drawn wittingly and willingly to submit to our Master in Heaven. So we account (as we have reason) that only to be faith unfeigned, which God by his Spirit seals upon our hearts, in our hearing and reading the Scriptures.

But this may seem strange doctrine :  
to

to such as know nothing of these matters by experience. Therefore I shall discourse it a little, that I may (if possible) make it manifest even to reason.

The question between us and our Adversaries is about the Rule of faith. This faith (it is granted) is such as leads us to our bliss. Hence we Protestants conclude, that this faith cannot be wrought in us but by the Spirit of God, which alone worketh all spiritual good. And this also, that the Spirit of God works it (ordinarily at least) by the Word, as its most proper instrument. Will any put us to prove this? surely they must have too much of the Atheist that question it. For how was all the world converted to the faith of Christ? was it not by the preaching of Christs Word, and his Spirit opening their hearts to receive it in the power of it? did not Christ and his Apostles open and expound the Old Testament to confirm the truths of the Gospel? *Luke 24. 27. Acts 26. 22.* and did not the Spirit work that faith whereby thou-

sands

sands believed that truth?

But this is Scripture, and it must not be allowed (if our Adversaries be judges) to give evidence for us in this Case.

We shall therefore require them to shew, what service Tradition did when Christ and his Apostles preached the Gospel. We hope, they (*viz.* Christ and his Apostles) were assured some other way, that the Old Testament was the Word of God. And if they made use of it to open the blind eyes, we may be excused for saying, that God works faith in man by his Word, as the most usual Instrument. And if this also be questioned, let Papists shew, how faith, which saves our souls, is, or can be wrought by their Oral, or Practical Tradition. We know well, that children are apt enough to take up what they see, or hear their Progenitors do, or say before them. And so they commonly profess the Religion (whatever it be) which they find ready to their hands. Yea, it is with many, the great argument for their Religion, that their  
Fore-

Forefathers were so minded. But what is all this to the bringing us unto a sound believing on our Lord Jesus Christ, to the saving of our souls? we believe Scripture to be the Word of God, because it is the witness which God hath given of himself. Nor do we know any other way of receiving any Testimony, nor our Adversaries neither, as we think. We know too, that a man may believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and yet be far enough from that faith which will bring him to his happiness. The De-

Mar. 4. 6- vil (it is said) cited and urged Scripture, as Gods Word, though to a very bad purpose. Certainly, that faith which brings men to their happiness, is somewhat more then a bare belief of Scripture-Truth. It is indeed a receiving of Christ offered in the Promises, such as causes us to *account all but loss and dung for Christ*. And for this purpose, *God shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. 4. 6.

Now it almost amazeth us, to hear of

of such a faith wrought by Tradition. What ! hath God no Word at all, or hath he given no testimony nor witness of himself, and his will, beside the testimony of men ? what need is there of Scripture if this strange doctrine take place ? For ( say our Adversaries ) Tradition is the only Rule of faith, and it hath admirable strength by the supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost. Nay further, we must be all Faniticks, if we hold to Scripture, and let go Tradition. But this needs no answer with those who believe that God hath a Word of his own to be a witness of his will. And shall we be perswaded, that the Testimony of men is greater then that of God ? there may be ( we grant, and question not ) some force of Tradition for the descent of the main body of Christs doctrine. But what is this to the purpose, unless it be proved, that the Testimony of men is the power of God to salvation, whiles by it, and not by his Word, he brings men to believe ? Alas ! what faith do our Adversaries count upon !

Do

Do they dream of being saved only by a certain perswasion, that the doctrine of Christ is a truth, and no lye? If they do, let them keep their faith to themselves. We count upon somewhat else, which (we are sure) can never be effectually wrought in us but by the Word, and Spirit of God. And yet we do not yield to them, that we can be no other way ascertained of the doctrine of Christ as true, then by Tradition. For we believe the Testimony of God speaking to us in Scripture, and shall (I hope) while we live, account of it more then Tradition, or any Testimony of men.

I shall now add somewhat as an Answer in general to all, and every one of the former Exceptions, or any others of the same, or like kind.

We say, that there is one onely Rule of Faith and manners, and that is the Divine truth, or the Doctrine of Christ, which is summed up into these two general heads, *viz.* Faith and Obedience, or faith and holiness, according to what God hath declared,

red, as his mind and will. What he promises, we are to believe; and when he commands we are to obey. And in both we fulfill the will of God, and walk in the ways of eternal life. This Divine truth we never found any where, but in the Scripture, and if our adversaries have made any other discovery, we think it their duty, to acquaint us with it. That the Son of God was made man, died, and rose again, &c. for our redemption, all Christians acknowledge; as also, that all who hope for salvation by Christ Jesus must deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. And this to know and do is eternal life, and if our adversaries, or any before them, ever knew this doctrine otherwise then by Scripture, we are willing to learn. For their Traditions ( as they signify *Res traditas* ) we have nothing to do with them. For the question put to us, is only this, how we are, or can be ascertained of Scripture, that it hath delivered over to us the Do-  
ctrine

ctrine of Christ? and this question drawn out into many and several Queries, we have answered already, and now give this as an answer to all of them or any the like. And this we do, not for the sake of such as are more knowing, and better grounded in the faith, but only for the benefit of poor souls, who through want and weakness of understanding, may be puzzled with such questions.

Now to these we say again, that we hold nothing for a Rule of faith but the Divine truth, which teaches the way of salvation by Christ. For Originals, or translations of Scripture, we know there was a time, when there was neither of them. And yet there was ever, since God had a Church upon earth, a revelation of the doctrine of Christ. Hence this Doctrine must be the Rule, unless we will say the people of God had no Rule of faith for two thousand years, and more. For whatever God reveals as his mind, that we must heed to believe, and obey. There may be a difference, and hath been



been in the manner of Revelation; but the Divine truth revealed was alwaies the same, viz. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.* Heb. 13. 8. *There is no other name given under Heaven, whereby men can be saved,* A&C. 4. 12. This we believe, as all Gods people have done from the beginning, and this doctrine of Christ (which we find no where but in the holy Scriptures) is the Rule, and Law, and foundation of our faith. So the Rule is, and hath been always the same; though the way and manner of revealing it hath been various, according to the will and pleasure of God, and that at first more obscure, and after more and more clear, till the Sun of righteousness arose. And of this doctrine revealed no Christian (we suppose) hath ever made question. What need is there then of such captious Queries about the Originals and Translations? or about the letter and sence of Scripture? We are sure, that all Originals and Translations offer and hold forth the doctrine

ctrine of Christ, and whatever the letter be, this is the sence, that Christ is the only salvation of God.

And is there indeed no way of assuring this to us, but Tradition, or the Churches Testimony, as it hath been given in all ages? This (as hath been said) is to confirm the Testimony of God, by that of men. And if our Faith be grounded only on the Translation, (English, or other) our foundation is the knowledge, skill, and faithfulness of men, and they that cannot read (as some, we are sure, cannot) must have no foundation at all. But he that hath the truth of God concerning the salvation of men by Jesus Christ, whether in the Originals, or Translations, or wheresoever, hath a sure foundation, viz. the unchangeable counsel of God which never fails. As for the Translations, or the Originals; though the truth of God contained in them be the Rule, yet neither of them is any part of it. For they are only means to conveigh and deliver over to men the Divine truth, which  
is

is the only Rule. And this we have ( I say again ) in all Originals and Translations; and whatever sences have been made of Scripture by any, all agree unanimously in the doctrine of salvation by Christ. What need we then be questioned about that, which no Christian ever made Question of? If there be any such as doubt, whether men are saved by Christ only, or whether they who are saved by him, must walk in love, and shew their love by keeping his Commandments, we desire to have nothing to do with them, as not deserving the name of Christians. And whether we can be assured of this doctrine in no other way then by Tradition, I shall now leave to be judged by such as will impartially weigh what hath been said.

I have now done arguing and answering, and shall only advise such, as are by their profession Protestants, that they would seriously bethink themselves, how they may hold fast the profession of their faith, without wavering, unto the end.

The

The advice I offer them, is,

1. That they labour much, and earnestly to understand the mind and meaning of God in his written Word. And good reason there is for it: Gods Word is his last Will and Testament, by which alone we come to know, what Inheritance there is laid up for us in Heaven, and what Legacies he hath bequeath'd us for our livelihood and subsistence to all Eternity. Scripture is (as I may call it) the Charter by which we have and hold all the Liberties and Privileges which are freely confer'd and bestowed on us, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; as also, all the Laws and Orders we are bound to observe, as we are Citizens of the New and Heavenly *Jerusalem*. What should Christians then do other, then read over their Fathers Will, and study exactly in every particular what concerns them in order to their everlasting happiness. The Letter, and the sence, the History, and the mysterie, every part and particle should be in our hearts and heads,

so as we may have them (as we say)  
at our fingers ends.

If any ask, How shall this be? I  
answer, That I intend no direction  
to those who know better then my  
self, what is to be done for that end,  
nor yet for those who are more  
knowing, or of better estates and abi-  
lities. For these have many and great  
advantages to understand the Scrip-  
tures, by improving the labours of  
those learned ones that have made it  
their work and business to clear the  
more obscure and difficult passages in  
them. My only aim is, to help those  
poor souls, who want the help of lar-  
ger Commentaries, Annotations, or  
Paraphrases, &c. and have no means  
to procure them, or if they had, are  
no way capacitated to use them. I  
mean such as can hardly read our  
English Bibles, and others (too ma-  
ny) who cannot do so much. For  
these, as well as others, are con-  
cern'd to enquire after the knowledge  
of Gods will in his Word, and these  
are therefore to read it, or hear it  
read to them, in such a manner, as to  
under-

understand what they read and hear. And this (I am confident) they may be enabled to do in some good measure, by following the directions ensuing.

1. Let them be first, and most in studying those Scriptures, which are plainest, and most easie to be understood; *viz.* The New Testament, wherein the Evangelists and Apostles speak to them, as to children, easily and plainly, in all points of faith and manners, whiles they declare more familiarly, according to the dispensation of Gospel-times, how all the Prophecies and Promises of the Old Testament concerning Christ, and his Kingdom, are accomplished and fulfilled to a tittle, so as there is to be expected no other manifestation, till his coming to judge all the world in righteousness. The Old Testament (which shews what were the dispensations of Gods grace towards his people, till Christs coming in the flesh) must also be read in its order, and heeded too, if there were no other reason, for this, that we may be the more

more confirm'd in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing he only from the beginning hath been promised and offered to mankind, as the only name under Heaven whereby we must be saved. For this is easie to be seen by all, who will open their eyes, That all the Histories of the Old Testament, the Books of *Moses*, and all the Laws and Ordinances by his hand delivered to *Israel*, as also the Psalms, and all the Prophets in every leaf and line of them, speak nothing but Christ, and the great things of God to be accomplished in and by him, unto the end of all things. They must therefore read both, comparing the one with the other, so as to observe, how all that was foretold and promised, is fulfilled and performed in these last dayes.

2ly. In reading both the Old and New Testament, let them take most notice of those places and passages, which more plainly and fully lay before them the main points and Articles of the Christian Faith, such as we may call the Pillars of the Chri-

Asian Church, built upon the only foundation Jesus Christ. And those I shall reduce to these three or four Heads.

1. The Fall of all Mankind, with the wofull extreme corruption, and depravation of our nature so perverted, as we are of our selves in every thing contrary to God, and his will, Enemies to all that is good, and inclin'd to nothing but evil.

2. The only all-sufficient remedy prepar'd for that malady, which was in it self desperate, and past all cure, or hope, viz. The fullness of Christ mighty to save, and the way of faith in applying him to our selves, for the pardon of all sin by his satisfaction and merit, and the purging of it by the efficacy of his grace and spirit.

3. The many and great obligations laid upon us by that grace, which hath appeared, and bringeth salvation; to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so to answer the condition of the Gospel-Covenant in serving him, who is our only Redeemer.

4. The



4. The providences of God, disposing of his people in all their wayes here upon earth, together with the Crown of righteousness laid up for them in Heaven, when they shall have run out their race, to receive the end of their faith.

Now who can look into Scripture, and not see all these clearly presented to his view? For what so plain to be read there, as Gods mercy through the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the recovery of fallen man out of sin and misery, and the duty unto which he is oblig'd upon that account? What need any be troubled at Scriptures difficulty? Can any read, or hear these read, as they are there set down, and make the answer which the Eunuch made to Philip, Act. 8. 31. asking him, If he understood what he read? And who is there that understands and believes these things with all his heart, that shall not be saved in the day of Christ? Here then

(I say again) let them labour to be rooted and grounded in the knowledge and belief of these things,

which they may run and read in Scripture, and till they are established, let them look no further. Yet is it not my mind, they should never look further. I would only have them begin with these, and to lay a sure foundation, and then build upon it by making a more strict Inquire into all, and every Particle of it, so as

Col. 2. 2. *their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Or (as the same Apostle hath it) To be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding, that they may walk worthy of his calling, to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

gily. Let them read, and read again, over and over as often as possible, though they alwayes meet with some things hard to be understood. For some, yea many things in Scripture are such, and yet it is not

not upon that account no Rule of Faith to the meanest Christian, and of the lowest form in Christs School. Yes we are justly confident to challenge our Adversaries, and put them to name one Article of our Faith, which the Scripture teacheth not as plainly, as any man can wish, or as they themselves can devise to speak it. Now these being so easily understood at first sight without an Interpreter, our often reading them (in so many places repeated) serves, as to help our memories, and confirm us the more in our belief, so to quicken us the more to our duty, in walking more answerably unto those great things of God. But there is somewhat more in it, and this they shall know that will be at pains to make a tryal, that often reading of these is a singular help to understand those which are more hard to be understood. For what is somewhere spoken more obscurely is in other places spoken more plainly, and the plain places, well remembred, will be as a Commentarie upon the more dark,

and difficult. And for this purpose let it be considered, that Scripture is difficult to none so much, as to those who are greatest strangers to it, and seldom take a Bible into their hands to read in it with any attention, whereas many (and I wish there were more) who can only read it, and use such small helps, as God ministers to them, while they are conscientious in what is their duty, are able to prove, and justify the main grounds (and articles of their faith) out of the word of God against any who question them. What if some things be difficult, so long as these which are absolutely necessary be plain, and easy. So all are not bound to the same degree, and measure of knowledge, and this (I hope) no sober man will question. I am now perswading those of the meanest, and lowest rank to study what (I say again) they may sufficiently understand, though they have none to guide them. And let them be still pressing forward and prying further, to discover as much, as may be seen,

and known. For why hath God revealed his will, but that we should acquaint our selves with it? *Let the word* Col. 3.16. *of Christ dwell in you richly, &c. i. e.* plentifully, abundantly. He means, It should not lodge as a stranger for a night, but abide with them, and they to give it rich and liberal entertainment, and make it their familiar, by frequent reading, hearing, meditating upon, and conferring about the Scriptures. And they who take this course, will soon find by experience, the improvement made by it. The often reviewing of any thing (as all men know) is a great help to see more in it, then ever we saw before. Now Scripture deserves (as I may say) to be much and often lookt upon, if it were only for this, that it is the Word of the great God. But there is somewhat else: Scripture resembles its Author in this, that as he is unsearchable, never to be known by any of his Creatures, or all of them, as he is in himself, so neither can it be sought into so far, as there will not still remain some-

thing that requires a further search. He that digs the deepest into this Mine, shall ever find new veins, such as were never discover'd before; yea, and when we have made the utmost search, the wisest of us must leave the world, signing some Texts with a *Non liquet*; In these we could never be resolv'd. Men have been in the discoveries of Natures mysteries ever since the Creation, and yet there is much that needs a further enquiry, yea somewhat (if not very much) that will never (I doubt) be found out by any. But however it be in Nature; we may reasonably conceive, that in supernatural Revelations, we can never stretch our selves so far, as to reach the utmost. All that is necessary to be known in order to our salvation, is easie enough to such as are willing to understand, and therefore ignorance can be no excuse. But all things in Scripture are not of the like necessity, and therefore we may think (I hope) without prejudice, that as Gods Spirit hath written some things more darkly

darkly to exercise our diligence, for he hath written some also to humble us, and make us know our selves. And what of all this? Scripture is still a plain and compleat Rule, fit for any that will make use of it, even such as can only read it, and their reading it will help them to understand enough, if they be serious, and attentive in it, though I would have them neglect no other means offered them, viz. Meditation, Conference, &c. And unto all, let them adde fervent Prayer, never opening the Bible without putting up to God that which was Davids great request, *Psal. 119. 18. Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law.*

4ly. Let them not bring their own sense to Scripture, but fetch the sense of it from out of it self, because (as one saith) the Divine Scripture contains the whole and firm Rule of Faith, and so its authority must sway us to take up that which it layes down, and nothing else. They take a wrong course therefore, who

first uncertain, and harbour a conceit, or opinion of their own, upon some base or by-respect, and then search, and rack, and torture Scripture, to make it speak what they have a mind to, which is in a manner to make God a lyar, in wresting his Word to justify and avouch the groundlesse conceits and fancies of mens deceived hearts. The only right way to know the sense and meaning of Scripture in any doubtfull Case, is to bring hearts as pure as white paper, apt to receive, and rest in the determinations of it, whatever they be, though never so contrary to our designs.

Q. But what shall we do to know the true and right determination, as Scripture gives it, especially when many, as knowing as our selves, cannot agree about it?

A. It is altogether impossible for some men to understand aright the mind of God in Scripture, because they enquire after it, with a mind resolv'd to hold what they have once taken up, whatever it be. Such

are



are all that are wise in their own eyes, and wiſſull in their own wayes, wedded to their wills, and abandon'd to their filthy and fleſhly Interests. Such as these are constant and ordinary in works and wayes of ungodliness and unrighteousness, notwithstanding Scripture-commands are so expressly and clearly against them. What can be more plain, then the 6th. 7th. 8th. and 9th. Commandments, and yet how many make a constant trade (as I may say) of uncleanness and cruelty, oppression, deceit and falshood? These might easily know Gods mind, if they had a mind to it. But they are Rebels against the light, resolv'd to serve their lusts, and have their wills, whatever God hath said to the contrary. And till these come to be of another mind, I am sure, they can never understand the mind of God in his Word, as he intended it.

2. To be resolv'd aright in all practical Questions and Cases, we must first resolve to renounce and abandon our own wills and affections,

ons, our lusts and interests, as the Apostles advise, *Jac. 1. 22. 1 Pet. 2. 1.* No paper thats besmear'd, or blotted, can be good to write upon: *The unlearned and unstable* (such as all are, who are sway'd by their own lusts) *will pervert all Scripture to their own destruction,* as the Apostle hath it, *2 Pet. 3. 16.*

*Q<sup>y</sup>.* But what must there be?

*Sol.* An honest upright heart, dispos'd and resolv'd to do all the wills of God, unto whose obedience it is subdued by the power of his grace

*1 Pet. 2. 2.* and spirit. New born babes desire *Jac. 1. 18.* to feed on that which bred them:

Now by the word of Truth they were begotten, and that the Apostle

*Peter* calls *milk*, exhorting Christians, after they are new born, to desire it, as little Infants do milk, to grow thereby. And lest they might think he meant, they should be always children, he calls it *\* reasonable sincere milk*, to shew, they should be in understanding men, as well as in malice children. An honest heart can never miss the mark, because

*Λογικὴν  
καὶ ἀσφαλὲς  
ut ne infir-  
mida sit  
simplicitas,  
ne c pro in-  
telligentiā,  
malitiosa  
affrities  
obrepit.  
Calvin in  
loc.*

because it aims at nothing but to know, and do the will of God: For such a one hath the promise of God for his security. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant:* And vers. 12. *Him shall he teach in the way that he shall chuse.* Let none therefore that are truly honest, and sound at heart, fear or doubt lest they should mistake their way, so long as God undertakes to be their guide. The Word is, as God himself, a light, and often so called; and how can he go astray, that hath God and his Word to lead him? Yea, *the entrance of thy words is light, it giveth understanding unto the simple,* saith the Psalmist. Even the veriest Idiots may here learn at first sight, what the wisest of the world without grace will never attain unto. And what if such poor souls should never understand all Scripture-passages, so as to satisfie themselves about the true sence and meaning of them! Surely there's no hurt, nor hazard, so long as they are sure to be taught of God in

Psal. 25.  
14.

Psal 19:  
7, 8.

Psal. 119,  
130.

in all the concernments of their souls.

To close up this; Read (I say) with an intention and resolution to practice all that appears to be duty, and remember well those words of our Saviour, *Joh. 7. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* For to him that hath, (i. e. that improves what he hath) shall more be given, and he shall have abundance. And thus (as one saith) they want no gifts for understanding the Text, that have, and use the Text it self, in that all Exposition is to be fetched out of it.

I shall adde to the foregoing Direction this one word, *viz.* That they who are honest, be also humble, because to such only is the promise of grace made, *Jac. 4. 6. 1 Pet. 5. 5. The meek will be guide in judgement, and the meek will be teach his way, Psal. 25. 9.* He that is wise in his own conceit, cannot hope to be wiser through the teachings of the Spirit, because God resisteth the proud, or *Prov. 3 34 he scorneth the scornors.* He is not with

with them, but against them, and is so far from giving them more, as he takes away from them even that which they have.

sly.. Let their delight be in Gods Word, to meditate and muse often and seriously upon what they have read and heard. This was *Dauids* constant practice, as is to be seen by his professing it so often in the *Psalms*. And *Psal.* 1. 2. he gives it, as the character of a Blessed man, and one that's truly godly. Whoever delights in any thing, cannot but often think of it, yea, and take any occasion that's offered, to speak of it, because his heart is full of it. And this often thinking, and speaking of the Word, causes us both to understand it, and also to be more affected with it. Reading, and hearing, is as taking in meat; Meditation is as concoction and digestion, without which we shall never grow, or gather strength. There are many that read the Scripture, and can discourse of it, as being no strangers to it, and yet they are great strangers

to it all the while. And why? Because it is not in their hearts, to love and delight in it, as *David* did. They have a conceit of it, as somewhat worthy of some discourse now and then, when they have little else to do, or when company, or some accident gives them an occasion. But a professed Christian should be as *David*, so affected alwayes, as to say,

*Psal. 119. O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.* And again; *Thy*

*Psal. 119. word have I hid in mine heart, that*

*11. I might not sin against thee.* So the Word, thus hid, and laid up in the heart, would be at home, alwayes at hand to answer those bad neighbours that will be alwayes about our doors, to creep in, whenever there is an opportunity, yea and thrust them out, when they are urgent, as troublesome, unwelcom guests, and shut the door upon them. So much is clearly implied in the place next abovesited. The Word in the heart, as in a place of constant residence, is a *Barricado* against all the assaults and insinuations of sin, and Satan; and our Saviour

our gave a sufficient proof and experiment of it, when he was tempted of the Devil, *Mat. 4.* Search the Word therefore, so as to get it into thy heart, that it may lodge there, to be as a guard about thee, and whoever reads, or hears it with any other intention, I dare warrant him, shall never thrive in his soul by it. He may perhaps know much of the letter, and sence also, and be able to argue from it, so as to puzzle others about some difficult passages in it, but will never know any thing of it, so as he ought to know. For God hath given us his Word, as a choice Jewel, worthy of the best Cabinet we can find to lay it in, *viz.* The secret of our hearts, or the inmost closet of our souls. Our outward senses, our tongues, our understandings, our memories will give no entertainment to such a guest as the Word, which saith as God himself, *Give me thy heart, there's nothing else will content me.* There's never a room besides in our houses, where the Devil hath not a through-fare: Only the heart

heart fill'd and fenc'd with the Word laid up in it, is an impregnable Fort, which Satan may assault, but can never enter.

6ly. Let them study the Scriptures, and their own hearts together, so as to observe, how they suit one with the other, and how they clash, or accord together. Scripture is (we say) the only Rule, not of faith only, but of manners also, and by it alone we are to examine and try all the workings of our whole man, bodies and souls, our thoughts and fancies, our affections, purposes, and resolutions; whatever we design, or take in hand, all must be done by Rule, and there's no other Rule appointed of God for the regulating of our wayes and walkings, but his written Word. Let us then do as Workmen, that have their Square, or some other Rule alwayes by them, and ever and anon are measuring and examining how their work answers, and agrees with it. Now our work, in order to our Eternity, being of infinitely more consequence, we have  
more



more need to be alwayes measuring, that we go not beyond, or beside the line. This do therefore when you read, and study Scripture, viz. Apply it to the frame of your spirits, and the course of your lives, by a serious questioning your consciences, as in the presence of God, to this purpose, or, somewhat like, viz. Did I this or that according to this Rule? Did I consult God, and his Word, when I undertook such a business? Is the way I am now in, answerable to what God hath commanded? Do not I in such a design or undertaking, clash with some Commandment or other? O! that so many loose and vicious persons as are now adayes, would be perswaded to sit down, and seriously question themselves, whether their uncleanness, excess, revellings and riotings, cursed Oaths and blasphemies, and many other horrid Impieties, be agreeable to the Rule of Gods Word! But I must let them alone, and leave them till the time come, when they'll be made to know, that Gods Word is such a Rule, as will  
over-

over-rule, yea and run them down  
 so as they shall never rise more to  
 contradict it, as now they do. For  
 such as are more civil and sober, so  
 as to read the Scripture sometimes  
 (which those other likely seldome  
 or never do) I heartily wish, they  
 will henceforward observe, what  
 hath been said before, and lay their  
 lives to the Rule and Line, which  
 (I hope) they will do, if they  
 heartily believe the word of God to  
 be that Law, by which they and all  
 mankind shall one day be judg'd, and  
 tri'd. How else can they hope to  
 stand, and abide the trial? And  
 when shall they do this work of  
 searching and trying their hearts and  
 ways, if they set not about it now,  
 when they have nothin else to do,  
 but to frame their works, and do-  
 ings unto that which God hath laid  
 out to lead, and guide them to their  
 happiness?

7ly. Let them in reading observe,  
 and attend chiefly those things, which  
 are often inculcated, and most in-  
 sisted upon in Scripture. If any shall  
 ask

ask why, I answer, Because those (to be sure) are matters of greatest concernment. 'Tis a great vanity (specially in men of weak parts, and small gifts) to pry, and pore much (as some will do) upon such passages, as have difficulty enough in them to poze, and puzzle the wisest. And their vanity (to say no worse) is the more, because those difficult passages have, for the most part, nothing in them but what we may be safely ignorant of. And yet some things of greatest concernment may be more obscurely in some places delivered, But still I affirm confidently, they are elsewhere express'd more fully, and plainly, so as no man of common sence can doubt or make any question about them.

And if any shall object against what I have said, that we may be safely ignorant of some things declar'd in Scripture, I answer, That in this I am (if I mistake not) of the same mind with all Divines in the world, who hold some things to be of the foundation, so as they are necessary to be known,

known, and believ'd in order to sal-  
vation, and others only superstru-  
ctive, such as ignorance or error  
about them, is not in it self damna-  
ble. Who can rationally suppose,  
that 'tis of the same consequence, to  
know every passage of Scripture Hi-  
story; as to know, and believe that  
Jesus Christ died for our Sins and  
rose again for our Justification? No  
question the Lord (who never did  
any thing in vain) would never  
have reveal'd, and recorded any the  
smallest matter, but that there was  
a cause. But thereupon 'twill never  
follow, that all things reveal'd do  
alike concern us. To instance;  
That the dead shall rise again, and  
come to judgement, is (as I take  
it) a fundamental Article of our  
Faith: But that the dead in Christ  
shall rise first, before they, who shall  
be found alive at the last day, shall  
be changed, is not (I think) of so  
much consequence, though this also  
is a truth of Divine Revelation, and  
therefore to be believed. If the  
dead be not raised, our faith is vain.

1. Thes.

4.

1. Cor.

1. Cor. 15. But so long as we believe the Resurrection, I suppose, we may be saved, though we should not know the order that will be in raising the dead, and changing them who will be then alive. All this however must be so understood and interpreted, as I intend it, not to allow, or countenance any wilfull neglect, or affected ignorance of any Scripture-Truths, but only to salve the Consciences of such, as cannot after all their most careful enquiry, come to know all the mind of God in every particular, as Scripture hath it. Can any man reasonably think, we are bound to mind, and remember every descent in all the Genealogies, as we are to have in mind the Birth, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ? who knows not the difference, that hath been among the most learned, and still is, in reconciling the Genealogy of our Saviour, as it is with some difference recorded in two Evangelists? And are there not (think we) many in Heaven, who never much studied

studied Christs Pedigree, after the  
 flesh? To return therefore where  
 we left; I say again, observe those  
 things especially, which are most in-  
 sisted on, because those are of most  
 concernment, and the Holy Ghost  
 often repeats them for this reason,  
 that we may the better mind, and  
 remember them. We know, and  
 believe, that in some one or more  
 Books of Scripture there is revealed  
 so much of Gods mind and will, as  
 is necessary to be known in order to  
 Salvation. And yet it pleased the  
 Lord to give us his mind in other  
 Books of Scripture, about the same  
 things, and many others besides,  
 that the joynt consent of many  
 might the more confirm our faith,  
 and we might in that which so much  
 concerns our Souls, have full mea-  
 sure pressed down, and running o-  
 ver. Witness the Evangelists all re-  
 cording the History of our Saviour  
 with some variety, though no con-  
 tradiction in the least. As also  
*Pauls* Epistles so often repeating the  
 doctrine of Salvation by Christ a-  
 lone,

lone, through faith in his blood, and the duties of all Christians in all their Relations. Now ( I say again ) observe, and attend those things, as being of greatest concernment, and others also in their order; For in so doing, we shall be sure to know so much as we need to do.

In a word; Read attentively, and that as often as may be, with all humility, and an earnest sincere desire to know the will of God in order to your doing it, alwayes begging the assistance of his grace and spirit, who alone teaches us to profit. Then will your own experience convince you, against all the reasonings of corrupt minds, that there is a clear light in Scripture, such as may easily be seen of all, whose eyes the God of this World hath not blinded, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

2. Not to rest themselves satisfied in a notional knowledge of Scripture-truths, but to labour for, and ne-

ver leave till they come to that which  
 is practical and experimental. For  
 then men are indeed grounded and  
 established in the truth, when they  
 have tasted of it so, as to know it by  
 experience. Then they believe Scrip-  
 ture to be the Divine truth, as a man  
 believes snow to be white, because  
 he sees it, or honey to be sweet, be-  
 cause he hath tasted of it. Labour  
 (I say) to set your [*Probatum est*] to  
 every Gospel truth, that you may be  
 able to say out of your own experi-  
 ence, this is the truth of Christ, and  
 cannot be otherwise. Then you may  
 reason as that woman did, *Joh. 4. 29.*  
*Come see a man that hath told me all*  
*things that ever I did ; Is not this the*  
*Christ ?* So you may say, here is  
 doctrine that hath discovered me,  
 as nothing else could have done.  
 Can this be any other then the  
 Word of God? there is nothing in  
 it, but what I am certainly assured  
 of, by what I know, and have found,  
 and felt in my self. Surely God  
 who is infinitely good, could ne-  
 ver produce out of himself, such  
 an



an unclean thing, as I am by nature. And that I am now altogether corrupted so, as in me dwelleth no good thing, I know by experience. Hence I cannot in the least question, what Scripture hath revealed concerning the fall of man from that estate of holiness wherein God first made him. For I am sure of it, because I find my natural and sinfull condition discovered to me in Scripture, just as I have felt in my self, and so laid open as I could never express it, yea, or have imagined it. And so is all that I read of the womans seed [Christ] and all the graces of Christ revealed in me, as that my heart is now the counterpart (as it were) of that act of pardon drawn with Gods own hand, and recorded in the Scriptures of truth. For the wayes of Gods Commandments; I now find, they are not grievous, but all pleasant, easie, and plain, as Scripture makes them. I care not for the reasonings of men, so long as I know the truths of God by what I find and feel in my self.

And for a motive take this, *viz.* Thou canst never be well rooted in the faith otherwise. Let the head be never so full fraught with knowledge, so long as the heart is not seasoned with grace, a man is capable of being overcome by such arguments, as will be suggested from worldly and fleshly Interests. He that loves any thing better then Christ, whatever be his present profession, or resolution, may be dissuaded from following him, when he comes to be tempted with fears, or favours from the world. Only he who hath learnt Christ as the truth is in him, to put off the old, and put on the new man is impregnable in all assaults, having the root of the matter in him, such as will never quail, or die right away. Many a *Demas* hath fallen off, having loved this present world, and no arguments will make a man invincible to all temptations, but an unfeigned faith that is alway attended with a good conscience. This, and nothing else can give a man Sure-footing

ing in his Christianity. There is many a great Scholar, who can dispute the truth against all gainsayers, and never be moved, or shaken, because he is thoroughly studied in the grounds of it, and understands the deceits and fallacies of all who are otherwise minded. But so long as his heart is not right with God, he is but as a tree with a great top, that may soon be turned up by the roots, if there come a great tempest or blast of temptation from worldly Interest, either to fright or flatter him out of his Religion. Hence I say again, never think yourselves well grounded in your Christianity, till you have studied the Scriptures, and your own hearts together, and found by experience that you are transformed by the renewing of your minds into that doctrine which is therein delivered to you.

3. And when you have found out the Divine truth in Scripture, by your experimental feeling of the grace and power in it, labour to hold it fast, and by no means let it

Prov. 23. 23. *Buy the truth, and sell it not ;*  
 23. *but contend earnestly for the faith once*  
 Jud. 3. *delivered to the Saints.* If any now

question, how this is to be done? my  
 advice is; *To order all your ways and*  
*doings exactly according as you find*  
*the Rule of them laid down in Scrip-*  
*ture.* For it is not the profession,  
 or forme, but the power of god-  
 liness (as I said before) that will  
 keep you stedfast unto the end.  
 Now Loosness and Carelessness in  
 your ways and walkings will expose  
 you to temptations, and not only  
 so, but they will also loosen and un-  
 rivet your souls from cleaving so close  
 to the truth, as you have formerly  
 done. You will find by wofull ex-  
 perience, that any indulgence to  
 worldly Interests, and fleshly lusts,  
 will much weaken your wonted affe-  
 ctions to the truths of Christ, and if  
 there be a continuance of that in-  
 dulgence, it will eat out all the life  
 and heart of your Religion, so as you  
 will never suffer, or venture much  
 for that which you love no better.  
 So long as your hearts are kept  
 warm

warm in the love of the truth, so long only you are stedfast, and unmoveable in the profession of it. There are many Protestants (so called) who know little (the more pity) of what they profess. And there are too many who (whatever they profess, or know) are vicious and abominable in their lives and conversations. For these, we must leave them to the mercy of God, in hope, that yet their eyes may be opened, and their hearts turned. But we cannot reasonably expect, that such should be constant in their profession, if once they meet with a strong temptation. Alas ! how should they, who know, and love the truth no better? Yea, though men may perswade themselves and others in a calme, what courage and resolution they have, and will be ready to shew in a storm, yet if there be not sincerity and real mortification of all lusts constantly endeavoured and exercised, their hearts will deceive them, when they are most confident of them. Any prevailing

Interest in a Soul is as a strong bias in a boule. A man may aim to cast the boule so, as it shall run in a right line to the mark, but the bias will never suffer it to run, as is intended. And so it will prove by every one whose heart hath a bias in it. For it will turn aside (ere it come half way home) whither its Interest carries it. Sirs, it is no small matter to abide by a mans profession and Religion, when he is put to it by any great tryal, whether of persecution, or promotion. Nay how can it be at all, unless the Interest of Christ, and the allurements of his love are such, as will counterpoise all that is laid into the ballance against them? Will any man in cool blood venture life and all, unless there be somewhat of far more worth to countervail the loss? this therefore must be in order to our stedfastness in the faith, *viz.* A constant exercise of practical godliness for keeping up a good understanding and correspondence between God and our Souls, that we may be

so

so warmed with continual influences from Heaven, as to say with the Apostle; 2. Cor. 5. 14. *That the love of Christ constraineth us.* 'Such, and 'so great are the manifestations which 'he hath made of himself, and his 'love to our Souls, as we can never be 'thankfull as we ought, but in a full 'and absolute resignation of our selves, 'and all we have to his service and glory.

2. I advise yet farther; that in our greatest enlargements we walk humbly with God, as knowing that his power alone is all the strength whereby we are enabled to stand. Peters presumptuous confidence in his own strength, wrought nothing but repentance for his fainting in an evil day. *By his own strength shall* 1. Sam. 2. *no man prevail.* And therefore the 9<sup>th</sup> Apostle exhorts, *to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,* Eph. 6. 10. *and to put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil;* v. 11. *It is God alone that keeps the feet of his Saints,* 1. Sam. 2. 9.

There need no motives (I hope) to perswade. However consider,

1. What we have believed. Not cunningly devised fables, but a sure
2. Pet. 1. Word of Prophecy, such as the Apostle seems to prefer (if the comparative be sent'd according to the letter) before visions and immediate Revelations: Or he might so call them, because the Prophecies might be more sure to the godly *Jews* through long use and acquaintance. We know the *Jews* at *Berea* examined *Paul's* doctrine by the Scriptures, and are not taxed, but commended for it. And if an Angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine, then what we have in Scripture, we have no reason to believe it. Those blessed Spirits indeed never did it, nor ever will. But we make the supposition, which the Apostle doth, *Gal.* 1. for the more Emphasis. For Scripture-truths, they are of long standing, and approved by their abiding the test and triall of so many ages. Christ and his Apostles made the old Testament the Standard of their doctrine,



doctrines, and appealed to it for the proof of all they preach to the people. *Moses and the Prophets are more to be heeded*, then if a man rose from the dead, *Luk. 16. 31.* And they who hear not the one, will never regard the other, if our Saviour said true. Was it ever heard that any doctrine so much as pretended to Scriptures antiquity? Or is it possible that any thing but certain truth should outstand the siftings and winnowings of so many ages, specially when it hath had so many professed enemies? Shall we now call in question what was never questioned before? Have not all Christians (who deserved that name) unanimously agreed in believing the faith and truth delivered in Scripture? or do Protestants now believe any thing, that was not believed by all Saints ever since any part of Scripture was penned? we believe on the Son of God who gave himself a ransom for all. And this Doctrine we have in *Moses*, who was the *first penman of Scripture*, and (as our Saviour saith) *Joh. 5. 46*  
wrote

wrote of him. Must we now call in question all that *Moses*, and the Prophets, and the Apostles have written, yea, and cry it down as no Rule of faith? then farewell all our Christianity, and the Christian Religion at once. For where have we learnt all the *mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, &c.* 1 Tim. 3. *fin.* Who, or what hath given us to know, what have been all the Transactions of God with the sons of men, in order to eternal life from the beginning? Will our Adversaries say roundly once for all, that the doctrine of Scripture is not the doctrine of Christ? Let them speak out, if they have a mind to say so, and then we know what to answer them. But if they will not avow this, (as indeed they have not yet in plain terms) we have this to say for our selves, that we believe, what they deny not to be the truth of God, and the doctrine of Christ. That we cannot be assured of this otherwise then by Tradition, hath  
been

been already answered, and no more needs to be said about it. For mens Tradition, we know it will serve (nothing better) to usher in and establish mens Inventions. But shall we renounce our own Reason so far, as to appeal to men (who are all lyars) for the truth of what is spoken by him that cannot lye? Oh! consider and remember, that in believing Scripture, we believe not Prophecies, or Prodigies, not heard of till yesterday. No; we believe the everlasting Gospel, and the good old way to rest and peace. The very doctrine of practical godliness, and moral righteousness, taught us in Scripture, is such as we cannot but assent unto it, as agreeing with, and approved by our natural light, so as we must forfeit our Reason, ere we can be perswaded to question Scriptures authority. Read but the *Prophets*, and the *Psalms*, and the *Proverbs*, and *Pauls Epistles*, or other parts of Scripture, and consider the precepts of sobriety, temperance, righteousness, justice and truth, which

which are there so many; and will not our consciences say, these are all of God, and we know they are Divine by the natural light which is in us? Who could have cleared up the inbred notions and impressions that are upon all mens hearts, so as they are cleared in Scripture, but that light in which alone we see light? for the myserie of Godliness; we know it is altogether of supernatural Divine Revelation, and being such, what need is there, or can there be of any mens or Churches authority to confirm it? To say no more, let Reason judge and determine, whether the faith of men can authoritatively confirm the faith of God. And yet it must, if we cannot be ascertained of the one without the other; yea, and our faith in Gods testimony must be resolved into the testimony of men, as yielding to us the greatest certainty, beyond all doubt or question. Consider, I say, what we have believed, viz. the ancient, yea, eternal Word of the ever-living God, and this Word alwayes  
 one

one and the same as God is, only at sundry times, and in divers manners, it was spoken to the Fathers, by the Prophets, and in these last times to us by the Son himself, and such as he hath sent.

2. Consider, that in believing the testimony of God in his written Word, we believe and receive the faith of our Forefathers, who suffered for their close adhering to Scriptures doctrine, and could not be parted from it, but rather chose to part with their lives for it. And herein they approved themselves the genuine and kindly issue of all the antient Martyrs, who loved not their lives unto the death for the testimony of Jesus. We should too much wrong our selves, and the cause of Christian Religion to yield that, which our Adversaries will never be able by dint of argument, to force from us, viz. That we are upstarts, newly sprung out of the ashes of our late Reformers. They were (as we call them) Reformers, that repaired the desolations which had been made in  
many

many ages, and did not coin a new faith never before heard of. We are not *Calvinists*, or *Lutherans*, (though so miscalled by some) but *Christians*, as *Luther*, *Calvin*, and others were in the last age. And they and all others of the same profession, stood to maintain their doctrine, as the faith of Forefathers, all along from the beginning of the Gospel. And our Adversaries are not ignorant, that this hath been held and sufficiently made good by the vote and testimony of the most antient Fathers, unto whom our Learned have appealed as unto Judges in this Cause. But our faith is not in the Fathers never so antient or learned, but in our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have learnt to count and call our Father and Master, as being the only Lawgiver. Only we appeal to the Fathers thus far, as to produce them for our witnesses, and know we have reason to alledge their testimony, because they owned the same doctrine of Christ, which we now do. And though the  
 appeal-

appellation of Protestants was occasioned in the last age by the Protestation made against the *Interim*, yet these were but successors to those, who had for many ages before protested against the additions and inventions of men, besides the Rule of faith. We can therefore plead Antiquity and Succession, as well as others, and better too, unless they could prove better then they have done yet, that their Faith is the same that was delivered by the Apostles. For this is it which we build our faith upon, and by this are we confirmed in it, viz. That we profess the same truths, which the Apostles received from Christ, and delivered unto the first Christian Churches. Hence we say, when we are told, that the Tenets of our Adversaries (wherein they differ from us) have been received for many ages, that they are not so old as the Apostles. Besides we know, that *customs besides or* Cypr. Ep. 74.  
*against truth, is but an old error: Tert. de*  
*And whatsoever is against truth, is an ve! and.*  
*Heresie, though never so old: Truth* ving. c. i.

is older then error, and good was before any evil. And so we consent, that what was first, was best. But that our Adversaries Tenets are such, we deny, and say, they were not from the beginning, though some of them were taken up early enough, and too soon, as ( we know ) it was not long ere sin got into the world, and yet it was after God had made men righteous. Our Saviour, *Matth. 5.* corrects many things that had been long received, and went for currant, by opposing his Word against them, [*But I say unto you* ] It is abundantly enough to justify us in what we hold, that we find our faith in Scripture, and this our Adversaries know very well, and therefore we need not marvel, that they are so busie in raising doubts and questions about its Divine authority. For let us once let Scripture go ( as some would have us ) our faith is gone also. Were it not for Scripture, I know nothing to hinder, why every man may not coine a faith to himself, and say it is the doctrine of Christ.

Yea,



Yea, deny Christ and all Christianity. For what have we to prove it besides the Scripture? or how can we disprove any damnable doctrines and devices of men without it? O! let us never think of turning from the good old way, wherein we follow all those Champions, whom nothing could perswade to part with it.

3. Consider what, and how much we loose, if we hold not fast this ground of our confidence stedfast unto the end. It is not for nothing, that our adversaries press and urge us so much this way. They tell us plainly, that let go this and all is gone. And they say truly in it. For our faith hath no Sure footing, if Scriptures authority be such as they would make it. We have separated from them for many years past, and the true reason and ground of our separation was, that they held and practised so many things contrary to Scripture, and would not yield to lay them aside. Hereupon we resolved to communicate no longer with them; because we could not admit  
what

what we judged sinfull, as being against, or beside that which we count the only Rule.

This ( I say ) hath been and still is the quarrel between us; For if it be observed, in our differences with them, we still are on the negative part. And why so? Surely, because our differences are about such things as they hold besides and against Scripture. For in these we are bound to deny what they affirm. I say again bound, *sub pœnâ* of losing all our profession, so far as we are Protestants in opposition to Papists. And this let any man that is sober and intelligent judge of. For let Oral and Practical Tradition ( as they call it ) be the only Rule of faith, what is become of Scripture? may I not justly ask, whether it be something, or a meer empty nothing? what can it be ( at best ) more then a Cipher, which ( we know ) in numbering stands for nothing, unless a figure be put to it? Tradition ( say they ) is that, and that only, which can ascertain us, that this is the very doctrine

doctrine of Christ which we believe.  
 And then what is Scripture more  
 then a dead letter? and Tradition is  
 it which gives Spirit and life to it.  
 And where are we then? even where  
 our adversaries would have us to be.  
 Then we must go to the Church for  
 our faith, and take that for the truth,  
 which hath been delivered down for  
 many ages whatever it be, right or  
 wrong. The Church (say they)  
 cannot erre. And so say we. But  
 they, and we are not agreed for all  
 this. For they mean no other Church,  
 then their own, and this (say they)  
 hath the true faith which from the A-  
 postles was delivered at first, and  
 hath been conveighed down succes-  
 sively in all ages, and it now rests  
 only among Roman Catholicks.  
 God hath and ever had (say we) a  
 Church, or society of men on earth,  
 who did not, indeed could not (be-  
 cause of Gods promise) erre in any  
 thing necessary to to be known and  
 believed in order to salvation. But  
 we cannot admit their Church, and  
 this to be all one. God hath made

a promise to his Church that he will be with it to the end of the world, and this Church shall be led into all necessary saving truths. But let our adversaries shew us (if they can) one promise of God made to any generation of men after the flesh, such as was made to *Abraham's* seed, and was made good to them untill the promised seed came. *Israel* so long continued to be Gods people, because of his promise. But God hath no one people of one stock and kindred ever since, unto which he hath made any such promise. For many, who were once a people to God, afterwards became none, and they who yet are none, are in a capacity to be Gods people, and shall be such, when he pleases to call them. Hence we count nothing of any arguments drawn from personal and lineal succession, but look only after succession in doctrine. And this we have reason to do, seeing the Heavenly inheritance is entayled only upon those who know, and obey the truth. And where is this truth, if not in Scripture?

Scripture? and if we once let go Scriptures verdict in the Cause, must we not stand, or fall according to the sentence of the Church? and what Church can pretend to more then the Church of *Rome* will pretend unto? but let Scripture be judge in the Case, and it will soon appear, that all is but a vain and empty pretence. And why should we not appeal to it alone, and leave it to umpire the differences? Our adversaries never durst say as yet (for ought I have known) that it is not the Word of God, though some of them have spoken most unworthily of it, and reproached it so, as none would (I think) do, that seriously believed it to be indeed the Word of God. However they say not in terms, that it is not the Word of God, though that will be the consequence of what they say, and that (we think) unavoidable, if all things be duly considered. Surely to us it must be so. For if it hath no credit as to us, without a Certificate under the hands of men, it deserves no credit at all (such as we must give to

to

to it) as a Rule of faith, and the ground work of all our hopes. And this is rational, because then we need not go to Scripture, since there is somewhat else that is more to be credited, then it. For no man that is reasonable can be ignorant, that what makes any thing to be what it is, must be more such, if not formally, yet virtually, or eminently. And our adversaries take it so, and therefore say plainly, that Scripture for many reasons is no competent Rule of faith, but Tradition doth the work that is needfull to be done, and is a Rule in every respect compleat.

Now let this be granted, and then look about, and see what follows. They say and think, (though not truly) that they have Tradition by the forepart, viz. that all the first ages of the Christian Church held as they do now. And for the hinder end, they have it fast enough, as we all know. For we must grant, what we cannot (without impudence) deny, that the most of these parts of the world went *Rome-ward*, for many

ny of the latter ages. And we do not wonder at it, because it is no more then what Scripture hath foretold. And now if Scripture be thus laid by, what will become of all that faith which we have, other then what Papists have? or how can we refuse whatever they shall impose by their Tradition? And shall it be ever said, that we have made a separation so long, and now turn back again upon no other ground then this, *viz.* that Tradition is the Rule of Faith, and Scripture is every way unfit for such a work? what is this, but to cast dirt in the faces of all that went before us, and hazarded all to vindicate and obtain that liberty, which the written Word, so long suppressed, hath since had amongst us? For this was the rise and root of all the disorders and distempers that ever have been since the Apostles times unto this day; *viz.* that men have not contented themselves with a Rule of Gods making, but (in the pride of their hearts) would frame Laws unto themselves. And this began in the Apostles times,

by the workings of Satan in the false Apostles, who would then keep up the ancient Laws of God (intended only till the time of Reformation) when according to his will they ought to be laid aside. This (I say) we may justly suspect to have given the first occasion to others afterwards of devising many things besides the only Rule. And so it is come to pass by many degrees at last, that Scripture is no Rule at all, if some men may be credited in what they say.

And now let us consider what we have been doing for an hundred years and more. Have we all this while believed in vain? And have all those who are gone to another world before our eyes, died without hope? What! have we been in a sweet dream so long, and could never be awakened till now? Are we now to seek of a Rule of faith? Indeed we have then believed to small purpose, and so have many others whom we have hitherto thought to be with the Lord. What! have we never received any fruits of the Spirit,



rit, such as have been a seal to the truths of the written Word, so as we can say, we know what and whom we have believed? were our eyes never opened, nor our hearts ever humbled or melted? If they have been, then consider, what doctrine hath been preached to us, and by what means we came to be what we are. And have we not enough for all intents and purposes? we have Jesus Christ evidently set forth to us in Scripture, and no where else. And have we need of any other Saviour? we have the way of holiness in Scripture, as no where else, and can we go to heaven in any other way? Are we in danger of perishing by believing in Christ alone? or will the denial of our selves, and all ungodliness and worldly lusts (as Scripture commands, and requires) hazard our souls? Nay will not faith in Christ alone, such faith (I mean) as works by love, save us? then what will become of me, and others who never yet learnt any other way of salvation, and resolve (through Gods

help and grace) never to think of any other?

But I shall say no more, when I have related one story. *Darbishire* (*Benners* kinsman) said to *Hawkes* (the Martyr) You will have nothing, but your pretty Gods Book. No, (said *Hawkes*) and is not that enough for my salvation? Yes, (said the other) but not for your instruction. Then (said *Hawkes*) God send me the salvation, and take you the instruction. And of his mind am I, and many others too, I hope. If Scripture be not sufficient to shew and assure us, what we are to believe and do in order to our salvation, (as some would perswade us) we are resolved, however to leave our souls to Gods free mercy, as it is revealed therein, and leave others, that have a mind, to take all the Instruction, that is to be had by Tradition.

FINIS.



AN  
ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE  
READER.

**T**HE late dreadful Fire, kindled by our God-provoking sins and abominations, transcending all our Forefathers; (after so many miracles of mercies and deliverances) within three dayes space turned no less then 88 Parishes and Parish-Churches, with the Cathedral Church of the late great and glorious City of *London*, into heaps of ashes and rubbish, to the just horror and amazement of all Spectators of their flames and ruines; which as it proved extremely prejudicial and destructive to most Companies of the City, yet

none of them received so grand losses and dammages by that devouring Conflagration, as the *Company of Stationers*, most of whose Habitations, Store-houses, Shops, together with all their Stocks, Books, bound and unbound; (by reason of their combustibleness, and difficulty to remove them) were not only consumed in a moment, but their ashes, and scorched leaves, carried with the violence of the wind in the air, were scattered in sundry places above 16. miles distance from the City, to the great admiration of the Beholders. Amongst other millions of Books thus suddenly consumed, this little Book suffered in the same kind; however thou hast it now with many Additions. Reader, pray for the Author, and beg a blessing upon his endeavours for thy good.

*Farewell.*

A

*A brief Collection out of Simeon Dunelmensis his History, written Anno 1134. Johannes Hagustaldensis his Continuer, and others, when and how often the City of London hath been almost totally burnt by sudden Fires in former ages.*

**A** Nro Domini 798. <sup>a</sup> Lundonia <sup>a</sup> Sim. Dunelm. Hist. igne repentino cum magna hominum multitudine consumpta est. <sup>co. 114. l. 45.</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Anno 801. Hathuberht Lundo- <sup>b</sup> ibidem; nix Civitatis antistes vita hujus contempfit tempora: Et paulo post, magna pars vici ipsam repentino igne consumpta est. <sup>col. 118. l. 2.</sup>

These two great Fires in London within three years space, made it in a manner desolate and uninhabitable for

85, years, till re-edified by King

*ibidem*, Alfred, Anno 886. as the same<sup>c</sup> Hi-  
131. storian, and the Chronicle of Bromton  
31. col. thus record: *Eodem tempore* (Anno  
50. l. 9. 886.) Rex Anglorum Elfredus, post  
Chron. Jo- incendia urbium, stragesque populorum  
m. Brom- Londoniam per maximam Civitatem  
a, col. honorifice restauravit, & habitabilem  
12, 813. fecit; as if it was not habitable be-  
fore.

*ibidem*, Anno 982, Civitas Londonia  
161. igne cremata est; so Simon Dunel-  
30. col. mensis: But the Chronicle of Brom-  
177. l. 37. ton, fere igne cremata est.

*Sim. Du-* Anno Dom. 1087. Ferox flamma  
helm. Hist. urbes multas, Ecclesiam quoque Sancti  
al. 213. Pauli Apostoli, cum majore & meliori  
45. parte Londoniæ consumpsit.

*Henry de* Anno 1133. (21 H. 1.) Maxi-  
*Nygh: on* ma pars Londoniæ Civitatis in ebdo-  
*le Event.* mada Pentecostes combusta est; before  
*Engl. l. 2.* which, stella Cometes octavo idus  
*al. 2353.*  
*37.*  
*Sim. Du-* continua per Johannem Hugustaldensem, col. 263. l. 3.  
*helm. Hist.*

Octo-

Octobris fere per dies 7. apparuit :  
as we had two Comets succeeding  
each other in few Months, before the  
late-devouring *Pestilence*, and consu-  
ming *Fire*, visibly seen in and over  
*London*, not to be parallel'd in any  
Age.

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**FINIS.**

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